THE REVOLT OF THE OYSTER

DON MARQUIS

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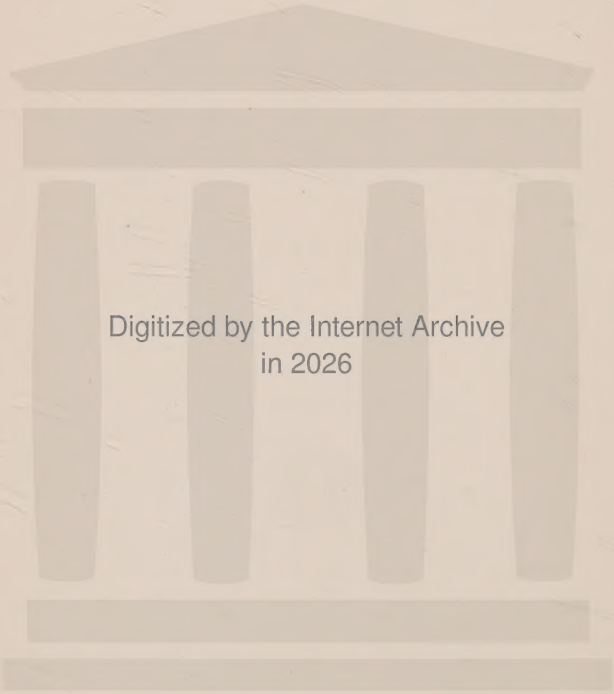
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THE REVOLT OF THE OYSTER

BOOKS BY DON MARQUIS

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Prefaces (Decorations by Tony Sarg)
Sonnets to a Red-Haired Lady and Famous Love Affairs
The Old Soak and Hail and Farewell
The Revolt of the Oyster

THE REVOLT OF THE OYSTER

BY

DON MARQUIS

GARDEN CITY NEW YORK
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1922

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THE REVOLT OF THE OYSTER

THE REVOLT OF THE OYSTER

"Our remote ancestor was probably arboreal."—*Eminent scientist.*

From his hut in the tree-top Probably Arboreal looked lazily down a broad vista, still strewn with fallen timber as the result of a whirlwind that had once played havoc in that part of the forest, toward the sea. Beyond the beach of hard white sand the water lay blue and vast and scarcely ruffled by the light morning wind. All the world and his wife were out fishing this fine day. Probably Arboreal could see dozens of people from where he crouched, splashing in the water or moving about the beach, and even hear their cries borne faintly to him on the breeze. They fished, for the most part, with their hands; and when one caught a fish it was his custom to eat it where he caught it, standing in the sea.

In Probably Arboreal's circle, one often bathed and breakfasted simultaneously; if a shark or saurian were too quick for one, one sometimes was breakfasted upon as one bathed.

In the hut next to Probably Arboreal, his neighbour, Slightly Simian, was having an argument with Mrs. Slightly, as usual. And, as usual, it concerned the

proper manner of bringing up the children. Probably listened with the bored distaste of a bachelor.

"I *will* slap his feet every time he picks things up with them!" screamed Slightly Simian's wife, an accredited shrew, in her shrill falsetto.

"It's *natural* for a child to use his feet that way," insisted the good-natured Slightly, "and I don't intend to have the boy punished for what's natural." Probably Arboreal grinned; he could fancy the expression on Old Sim's face as his friend made this characteristically plebeian plea.

"You can understand once for all, Slightly," said that gentleman's wife in a tone of finality, "that I intend to supervise the bringing-up of these children. Just because your people had neither birth nor breeding nor manners——"

"Mrs. S.!" broke in Slightly, with a warning in his voice. "Don't you work around to anything caudal, now, Mrs. S.! Or there'll be trouble. You get me?"

On one occasion Mrs. Slightly had twitted her spouse with the fact that his grandfather had a tail five inches long; she had never done so again. Slightly Simian himself, in his moments of excitement, picked things up with his feet, but like many other men of humble origin who have become personages in their maturity, he did not relish having such faults commented upon.

"Poor old Sim," mused Probably Arboreal, as he slid down the tree and ambled toward the beach, to be out of range of the family quarrel. "She married

him for his property, and now she's sore on him because there isn't more of it."

Nevertheless, in spite of the unpleasant effect of the quarrel, Probably found his mind dwelling upon matrimony that morning. A girl with bright red hair, into which she had tastefully braided a number of green parrot feathers, hit him coquettishly between the shoulder blades with a handful of wet sand and gravel as he went into the water. Ordinarily he would either have taken no notice at all of her, or else would have broken her wrist in a slow, dignified, manly sort of way. But this morning he grabbed her tenderly by the hair and sentimentally ducked her. When she was nearly drowned he released her. She came out of the water squealing with rage like a wild-cat and bit him on the shoulder.

"Parrot Feathers," he said to her, with an unwonted softness in his eyes, as he clutched her by the throat and squeezed, "beware how you trifle with a man's affections—some day I may take you seriously!"

He let the girl squirm loose, and she scrambled out upon the beach and threw shells and jagged pieces of flint at him, with an affectation of coyness. He chased her, caught her by the hair again, and scored the wet skin on her arms with a sharp stone, until she screamed with the pain, and as he did it he hummed an old love tune, for to-day there was an April gladness in his heart.

"Probably! Probably Arboreal!" He spun around to face the girl's father, Crooked Nose, who was contentedly munching a mullet.

"Probably," said Crooked Nose, "you are flirting with my daughter!"

"Father!" breathed the girl, ashamed of her parent's tactlessness. "How can you say that!"

"I want to know," said Crooked Nose, as sternly as a man can who is masticating mullet, "whether your intentions are serious and honourable."

"Oh, father!" said Parrot Feathers again. And putting her hands in front of her face to hide her blushes she ran off. Nevertheless, she paused when a dozen feet away and threw a piece of drift-wood at Probably Arboreal. It hit him on the shin, and as he rubbed the spot, watching her disappear into the forest, he murmured aloud, "Now, I wonder what she means by that!"

"Means," said Crooked Nose. "Don't be an ass, Probably! Don't pretend to *me* you don't know what the child means. You made her love you. You have exercised your arts of fascination on an innocent young girl, and now you have the nerve to wonder what she means. What'll you give me for her?"

"See here, Crooked Nose," said Probably, "don't bluster with me." His finer sensibilities were outraged. He did not intend to be *coerced* into matrimony by any father, even though he were pleased with that father's daughter. "I'm not buying any wives to-day, Crooked Nose."

"You have hurt her market value," said Crooked Nose, dropping his domineering air, and affecting a willingness to reason. "Those marks on her arms will not come off for weeks. And what man wants to marry

a scarred-up woman unless he has made the scars himself?"

"Crooked Nose," said Probably Arboreal, angry at the whole world because what might have been a youthful romance had been given such a sordid turn by this disgusting father, "if you don't go away I will scar every daughter you've got in your part of the woods. Do you get me?"

"I wish you'd look them over," said Crooked Nose. "You might do worse than marry all of them."

"I'll marry none of them!" cried Probably, in a rage, and turned to go into the sea again.

A heavy boulder hurtled past his head. He whirled about and discovered Crooked Nose in the act of recovering his balance after having flung it. He caught the old man half way between the beach and the edge of the forest. The clan, including Crooked Nose's four daughters, gathered round in a ring to watch the fight.

It was not much of a combat. When it was over, and the girls took hold of what remained of their late parent to drag him into the woods, Probably Arboreal stepped up to Parrot Feathers and laid his hand upon her arm.

"Feathers," he said, "now that there can be no question of coercion, will you and your sisters marry me?"

She turned toward him with a sobered face. Grief had turned her from a girl into a woman.

"Probably," she said, "you are only making this

offer out of generosity. It is not love that prompts it. I cannot accept. As for my sisters, they must speak for themselves."

"You are angry with me, Feathers?"

The girl turned sadly away. Probably watched the funeral cortège winding into the woods, and then went moodily back to the ocean. Now that she had refused him, he desired her above all things. But how to win her? He saw clearly that it could be no question of brute force. It had gone beyond that. If he used force with her, it must infallibly remind her of the unfortunate affair with her father. Some heroic action might attract her to him again. Prabably resolved to be a hero at the very earliest opportunity.

In the meantime he would breakfast. Breakfast had already been long delayed; and it was as true then, far back in the dim dawn of time, as it is now, that he who does not breakfast at some time during the day must go hungry to bed at night. Once more Probably Arboreal stepped into the ocean—stepped in without any premonition that he was to be a hero indeed; that he was chosen by Fate, by Destiny, by the Presiding Genius of this planet, by whatever force or intelligence you will, to champion the cause of all Mankind in a crucial struggle for human supremacy.

He waded into the water up to his waist, and bent forward with his arms beneath the surface, patiently waiting. It was thus that our remote ancestors fished. Fish ran larger in those days, as a rule. In the deeper waters they were monstrous. The smaller fish there-

fore sought the shallows where the big ones, greedy cannibals, could not follow them. A man seldom stood in the sea as Probably Arboreal was doing more than ten minutes without a fish brushing against him either accidentally or because the fish thought the man was something good to eat. As soon as a fish touched him, the man would grab for it. If he were clumsy and missed too many fish, he starved to death. Experts survived because they *were* expert; by a natural process of weeding out the awkward it had come about that men were marvellously adept. A bear who stands by the edge of a river watching for salmon at the time of the year when they run up stream to spawn, and scoops them from the water with a deft twitch of his paw, was not more quick or skillful than Probably Arboreal.

Suddenly he pitched forward, struggling; he gave a gurgling shout, and his head disappeared beneath the water.

When it came up again, he twisted toward the shore, with lashing arms and something like panic on his face, and shouted:

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" he cried. "Something has me by the foot!"

Twenty or thirty men and women who heard the cry stopped fishing and straightened up to look at him.

"Help! Help!" he shouted again. "It is pulling me out to sea!"

A knock-kneed old veteran, with long intelligent-looking mobile toes, broke from the surf and scurried to the safety of the beach, raising the cry:

"A god! A god! A water-god has caught Probably Arboreal!"

"More likely a devil!" cried Slightly Simian, who had followed Probably to the water.

And all his neighbours plunged to land and left Probably Arboreal to his fate, whatever his fate was to be. But since spectacles are always interesting, they sat down comfortably on the beach to see how long it would be before Probably Arboreal disappeared. Gods and devils, sharks and octopi, were forever grabbing one of their number and making off to deep water with him to devour him at their leisure. If the thing that dragged the man were seen, if it showed itself to be a shark or an octopus, a shark or an octopus it was; if it were unseen, it got the credit of being a god or a devil.

"Help me!" begged Probably Arboreal, who was now holding his own, although he was not able to pull himself into shallower water. "It is not a god or a devil. It doesn't feel like one. And it isn't a shark, because it hasn't any teeth. It is an animal like a cleft stick, and my foot is in the cleft."

But they did not help him. Instead, Big Mouth, a seer and *vers libre* poet of the day, smitten suddenly with an idea, raised a chant, and presently all the others joined in. The chant went like this:

"Probably, he killed Crooked Nose,
He killed him with his fists.
And Crooked Nose, he sent his ghost to sea

To catch his slayer by the foot!
The ghost of Crooked Nose will drown his slayer,
Drown, drown, drown his slayer,
The ghost of Crooked Nose will drown his slayer,
Drown his slayer in the sea!"

"You are a liar, Big Mouth!" spluttered Probably Arboreal, hopping on one foot and thrashing the water with his arms. "It is not a ghost; it is an animal."

But the chant kept up, growing louder and louder:

"The ghost of Crooked Nose will drown his slayer!
Drown, drown, drown his slayer,
Drown his slayer in the sea!"

Out of the woods came running more and more people at the noise of the chant. And as they caught what was going on, they took up the burden of it, until hundreds and thousands of them were singing it.

But, with a mighty turn and struggle, Probably Arboreal went under again, as to his head and body; his feet for an instant swished into the air, and everyone but Probably Arboreal himself saw what was hanging on to one of them.

It was neither ghost, shark, god, nor devil. It

was a monstrous oyster; a bull oyster, evidently. All oysters were much larger in those days than they are now, but this oyster was a giant, a mastodon, a mammoth among oysters, even for those days.

"It is an oyster, an oyster, an oyster!" cried the crowd, as Probably Arboreal's head and shoulders came out of the water again.

Big Mouth, the poet, naturally chagrined, and hating to yield up his dramatic idea, tried to raise another chant:

"The ghost of Crooked Nose went into an oyster,
The oyster caught his slayer by the foot
To drown, drown, drown him in the sea!"

But it didn't work. The world had seen that oyster, and had recognized it for an oyster.

"Oyster! Oyster! Oyster!" cried the crowd sternly at Big Mouth.

The bard tried to persevere, but Slightly Simian, feeling the crowd with him, advanced menacingly and said:

"See here, Big Mouth, we know a ghost when we see one, and we know an oyster! Yon animal is an oyster! You *sing* that it is an oyster, or shut up!"

"Ghost, ghost, ghost," chanted Big Mouth, tentatively. But he got no farther. Slightly Simian killed him with a club, and the matter was settled. Literary criticism was direct, straightforward, and effective in those days.

"But, oh, ye gods of the water, *what* an oyster!" cried Mrs. Slightly Simian.

And as the thought took them all, a silence fell over the multitude. They looked at the struggling man in a new community of idea. Oysters they had seen before, but never an oyster like this. Oysters they knew not as food; but they had always regarded them as rather ineffectual and harmless creatures. Yet this bold oyster was actually giving battle, and on equal terms, to a man! Were oysters henceforth to be added to the number of man's enemies? Were oysters about to attempt to conquer mankind? This oyster, was he the champion of the sea, sent up out of its depths, to grapple with mankind for supremacy?

Dimly, vaguely, as they watched the man attempt to pull the oyster ashore, and the oyster attempt to pull the man out to sea, some sense of the importance of this struggle was felt by mankind. Over forest, beach, and ocean hung the sense of momentous things. A haze passed across the face of the bright morning sun; the breeze died down; it was as if all nature held her breath at this struggle. And if mankind upon the land was interested, the sea was no less concerned. For, of a sudden, and as if by preconcerted signal, a hundred thousand oysters poked their heads above the surface of the waters and turned their eyes—they had small fiery opalescent eyes in those days—upon the combat.

At this appearance, mankind drew back with a gasp, but no word was uttered. The visible universe, perturbed earth and bending heavens alike, was tense and

dumb. On their part, the oysters made no attempt to go to the assistance of their champion. Nor did mankind leap to the rescue of Probably Arboreal. Tacitly, each side, in a spirit of fair play, agreed not to interfere; agreed to leave the combat to the champions; agreed to abide by the issue.

But while they were stirred and held by the sense of tremendous things impending, neither men nor oysters could be expected to understand definitely what almost infinite things depended upon this battle. There were no Darwins then. Evolution had not yet evolved the individual able to catch her at it.

But she was on her way. This very struggle was one of the crucial moments in the history of evolution. There have always been these critical periods when the two highest species in the world were about equal in intelligence, and it was touch and go as to which would survive and carry on the torch, and which species would lose the lead and become subservient. There have always been exact instants when the spirit of progress hesitated as between the forms of life, doubtful as to which one to make its representative.

Briefly, if the oyster conquered the man, more and more oysters, emboldened by this success, would prey upon men. Man, in the course of a few hundred thousand years, would become the creature of the oyster; the oyster's slave and food. Then the highest type of life on the planet would dwell in the sea. The civilization which was not yet would be a marine growth when it did come; the intellectual and spiritual and

physical supremacy held by the biped would pass over to the bivalve.

Thought could not frame this concept then; neither shellfish nor tree-dweller uttered it. But both the species felt it; they watched Probably Arboreal and the oyster with a strangling emotion, with a quivering intentness, that was none the less poignant because there was no Huxley or Spencer present to interpret it for them; they thrilled and sweat and shivered with the shaken universe, and the red sun through its haze peered down unwinking like the vast bloodshot eye of life.

An hour had passed by in silence except for the sound of the battle, more and more men and more and more oysters had gathered about the scene of the struggle; the strain was telling on both champions. Probably Arboreal had succeeded in dragging the beast some ten feet nearer the shore, but the exertion had told upon him; he was growing tired; he was breathing with difficulty; he had swallowed a great deal of salt water. He too was dimly conscious of the importance of this frightful combat; he felt himself the representative of the human race. He was desperate but cool; he saved his breath; he opposed to the brute force of the oyster the cunning of a man. But he was growing weaker; he felt it.

If only those for whom he was fighting would fling him some word of encouragement! He was too proud to ask it, but he felt bitterly that he was not supported, for he could not realize what emotion had smitten

dumb his fellow men. He had got to the place where a word of spiritual comfort and encouragement would have meant as much as fifty pounds of weight in his favour.

He had, in fact, arrived at the Psychological Moment. There were no professing psychologists then; but there was psychology; and it worked itself up into moments even as it does to-day.

Probably Arboreal's head went under the water, tears and salt ocean mingled nauseatingly in his mouth.

"I am lost," he gurgled.

But at that instant a shout went up—the shrill, high cry of a woman. Even in his agony he recognized that voice—the voice of Parrot Feathers! With a splendid rally he turned his face toward the shore.

She was struggling through the crowd, fighting her way to the front rank with the fury of a wildcat. She had just buried her father, and the earth was still dark and damp upon her hands, but the magnificent creature had only one thought now. She thought only of her lover, her heroic lover; in her nobility of soul she had been able to rise above the pettiness of spirit which another woman might have felt; she knew no pique or spite. Her lover was in trouble, and her place was nigh him; so she flung a false maidenly modesty to the winds and acknowledged him and cheered him on, careless of what the assembled world might think.

She arrived at the Psychological Moment.

"Probably! Probably!" she cried. "Don't give up! Don't give up! For my sake!"

For her sake! The words were like fire in the veins of the struggling hero. He made another bursting effort, and gained a yard. But the rally had weakened him; the next instant his head went under the water once more. Would it ever appear again? There was a long, long moment, while all mankind strangled and gasped in sympathetic unison, and then our hero's dripping head did emerge. It had hit a stone under water, and it was bleeding, but it emerged. One eye was nearly closed.

"Watch him! Watch him!" shouted Parrot Feathers. "Don't let him do that again! When he has you under water he whacks your eye with his tail. He's trying to blind you!"

And, indeed, these seemed to be the desperate oyster's tactics. If he could once destroy our hero's sight, the end would soon come.

"Probably—do you hear me?"

He nodded his head; he was beyond speech.

"Take a long breath and dive! Do you get me? Dive! Dive at your own feet! Grab your feet in your hands and roll under water in a bunch! Roll toward the beach!"

It was a desperate manœuvre, especially for a man who had already been under water so much that morning. But the situation was critical and called for the taking of big chances. It would either succeed—or fail. And death was no surer if it failed than if he waited. Probably Arboreal ceased to think; he yielded up his reasoning powers to the noble and courageous

woman on the sand; he dived and grabbed his feet and rolled.

"Again! Again!" she cried. "Another long breath and roll again!"

Her bosom heaved, as if she were actually breathing for him. To Probably Arboreal, now all but drowned, and almost impervious to feeling, it also seemed as if he were breathing with her lungs; and yet he hardly dared to dive and roll again. He struggled in the water and stared at her stupidly.

She sent her unusual and electric personality thrilling into him across the intervening distance; she held him with her eyes, and filled him with her spirit.

"Roll!" she commanded. "Probably! Roll!"

And under the lash of her courage, he rolled again. Three more times he rolled . . . and then . . . unconscious, but still breathing, he was in her arms.

As he reached the land half a million oysters sank into the sea in the silence of defeat and despair, while from the beaches rose a mighty shout.

The sun, as if it gestured, flung the mists from its face, and beamed benignly.

"Back! Back! Give him air!" cried Parrot Feathers, as she addressed herself to the task of removing the oyster from his foot.

The giant beast was dying, and its jaws were locked in the rigour of its suffering. There was no way to remove it gently. Parrot Feathers laid her unconscious hero's foot upon one rock, and broke the oyster loose with another.

Incidentally she smashed Probably Arboreal's toe.

He sat up in pained surprise. Unthinkingly, as you or I would put a hurt finger into our mouths, he put his crushed toe into his mouth. At that period of man's history the trick was not difficult. And then——

A beatific smile spread over his face!

Man had tasted the oyster!

In half an hour, mankind was plunging into the waves searching for oysters. The oyster's doom was sealed. His monstrous pretension that he belonged in the van of evolutionary progress was killed forever. He had been tasted, and found food. He would never again battle for supremacy. Meekly he yielded to his fate. He is food to this day.

Parrot Feathers and Probably Arboreal were married after breakfast. On the toes of their first child were ten cunning, diminutive oyster shells. Mankind, up to that time, had had sharp toenails like the claws of birds. But the flat, shell-like toenails, the symbols of man's triumph over, and trampling down of, the oyster were inherited from the children of this happy couple.

They persist to this day.

"IF WE COULD ONLY SEE"

I

Lunch finished, Mr. Ferdinand Wimple, the poet, sullenly removed his coat and sulkily carried the dishes to the kitchen sink. He swore in a melodious murmur, as a cat purrs, as he turned the hot water on to the plates, and he splashed profanely with a wet dishcloth.

"I'm going to do the dishes to-day, Ferd," announced his wife, pleasantly enough. She was a not unpleasant-looking woman; she gave the impression that she might, indeed, be a distinctly pleasant-looking woman, if she could avoid seeming hurried. She would have been a pretty woman, in fact, if she had been able to give the time to it.

When she said that she would do the dishes herself, Mr. Wimple immediately let the dishcloth drop without another word, profane or otherwise, and began to dry his hands, preparatory to putting on his coat again. But she continued:

"I want you to do the twins' wash."

"What?" cried Mr. Wimple, outraged. He ran one of his plump hands through his thick tawny hair and stared at his wife with latent hatred in his brown eyes . . . those eyes of which so many women had

remarked: "Aren't Mr. Wimple's eyes wonderful; just simply *wonderful!* So magnetic, if you get what I mean!" Mr. Wimple's head, by many of his female admirers, was spoken of as "leonine." His detractors —for who has them not?—dwelt rather upon the physical reminder of Mr. Wimple, which was more suggestive of the ox.

"I said I wanted you to do the twins' wash for me," repeated Mrs. Wimple, awed neither by the lion's visage nor the bovine torso. Mrs. Wimple's own hair was red; and in a quietly red-haired sort of way she looked as if she expected her words to be heeded.

"H——!" said the poet, in a round baritone which enriched the ear as if a harpist had plucked the lovely string of G. "H——!" But there was more music than resolution in the sound. It floated somewhat tentatively upon the air. Mr. Wimple was not in revolt. He was wondering if he had the courage to revolt.

Mrs. Wimple lifted the cover of the laundry tub, which stood beside the sink, threw in the babies' "things," turned on the hot water, and said:

"Better shave some laundry soap and throw it in, Ferd."

"Heavens!" declared Mr. Wimple. "To expect a man of my temperament to do that!" But still he did not say that he would not do it.

"Someone has to do it," contributed his wife.

"I never kicked on the dishes, Nell," said Mr. Wimple. "But this, *this* is too much!"

"I have been doing it for ten days, ever since the maid left. I'm feeling rotten to-day, and you can take a turn at it, Ferd. My back hurts." Still Mrs. Wimple was not unpleasant; but she was obviously determined.

"Your back!" sang Mr. Wimple, the minstrel, and shook his mane. "Your *back* hurts you! My *soul* hurts *me!* How could I go direct from that—that damnable occupation—that most repulsive of domestic occupations—that bourgeois occupation—to Mrs. Watson's tea this afternoon and deliver my message?"

A shimmer of heat (perhaps from her hair) suddenly dried up whatever dew of pleasantness remained in Mrs. Wimple's manner. "They're just as much your twins as they are mine," she began . . . but just then one of them cried.

A fraction of a second later the other one cried.

Mrs. Wimple hurried from the kitchen and reached the living room in time to prevent mayhem. The twins, aged one year, were painfully entangled with one another on the floor. The twin Ronald had conceived the idea that perhaps the twin Dugald's thumb was edible, and was testing five or six of his newly acquired teeth upon it. Childe Dugald had been inspired by his dæmon with the notion that one of Childe Ronald's ears might be detachable, and was endeavouring to detach it. The situation was but too evidently distressing to both of them, but neither seemed capable of the mental initiative necessary to end it. Even when little

Ronald opened his mouth to scream, little Dugald did not remove the thumb.

Mrs. Wimple unscrambled them, wiped their noses, gave them rattles, rubber dolls, and goats to wreak themselves upon, and returned to the kitchen thinking (for she did not lack her humorous gleams) that the situation in the living room bore a certain resemblance to the situation in the kitchen. She and Ferdinand bit and scratched figuratively, but they had not the initiative to break loose from one another.

Mr. Wimple was shaving soap into the laundry tub, but he stopped when she entered and sang at her: "And *why* did the maid leave?"

"You know why she left, Ferd."

"She left," chanted Ferdinand, poking the twins' clothing viciously with a wooden paddle, "because . . ."

But what Mr. Wimple said, and the way he said it, falls naturally into the freer sort of verse:

"She left [sang Mr. Wimple]
Because her discontent . . .
Her individual discontent,
Which is a part of the current general discontent
Of all the labouring classes . . .
Was constantly aggravated
By your jarring personality,
Mrs. Wimple!
There is no harmony in this house,
Mrs. Wimple;
No harmony!"

Mrs. Wimple replied in sordid prose:

"She left because she was offered more money elsewhere, and we couldn't afford to meet the difference."

Something like a sob vibrated through Mr. Wimple's opulent voice as he rejoined:

"Nellie, that is a blow that I did not look for! You have stabbed me with a poisoned weapon! Yes, Nellie, I *am* poor! So was Edgar Poe. What the world calls poor! I shall, in all likelihood, never be rich . . . what the world calls rich. But I have my art! I have my ideals! I have my inner life! I have my dreams! Poor? Poor? Yes, Nell! Poor! So was Robert Burns! I am poor! I make no compromise with the mob. Nor shall I ever debase my gift for money. No! Such as I am, I shall bear the torch that has been intrusted to me till I fall fainting at the goal! I have a message. To me it is precious stuff, and I shall not alloy it with the dross called gold. Poor? Yes, Nell! And you have the heart to cast it in my teeth! You, Nellie! You, from whom I once expected sympathy and understanding. You, whom I chose from all the world, and took into my life because I fancied that you, too, saw the vision! Yes, Elinor, I dreamed *that* once!"

II

Mr. Wimple achieved pathos . . . almost tragedy. To a trivial mind, however, the effect might have been somewhat spoiled by the fact that in his fervour he gesticulated wildly with the wooden paddle in one

hand and an undergarment belonging to Ronald in the other. The truly sensitive soul would have seen these things as emphasizing his pathos.

Mrs. Wimple, when Mr. Wimple became lyric in his utterance, often had the perverse impulse to answer him in a slangy vernacular which, if not actually coarse, was not, on the other hand, the dialect of the æsthete. For some months now, she had noticed, whenever Ferdinand took out his soul and petted it verbally, she had had the desire to lacerate it with uncouth parts of speech. Ordinarily she frowned on slang; but when Ferdinand's soul leaped into the arena she found slang a weapon strangely facile to her clutch.

"Coming down to brass tacks on this money thing, Ferdy," said Mrs. Wimple, "you're not the downy peach you picture in the ads. I'll tell the world you're not! You kid yourself, Ferdy. Some of your bloom has been removed, Ferdy. Don't go so far upstage when you speak to me about the dross the world calls gold. The reason we can't afford a maid now is because you got swell-headed and kicked over that perfectly good magazine job you used to have. You thought you were going to get more limelight and more money on the lecture platform. But you've been a flivver in the big time. Your message sounds better to a flock of women in somebody's sitting room full of shaded candles and samovars, with firelight on the antique junk, than it does in Carnegie Hall. You've got the voice for the big spaces all right, but the multitude doesn't get any loaves and fishes from you. Punk sticks and *nuances*

—the *intime* stuff—that's your speed, Ferdy. I don't want to put any useless dents into your bean, but that message of yours has been hinted at by other messengers. I stick around home here and take care of the kids, and I've never let out a yell before. And you trot around to your soul fights and tea fests and feed your message to a bunch of dolled-up dames that don't even know you have a wife. I'm not jealous . . . you couldn't drag me into one of those perfumed literary dives by the hair . . . I got fed up with that stuff years ago. But as long as we're without a maid because you won't stick to a steady job, you'll do your share of the rough stuff around the house. I'll say you will! You used to be a good sport about that sort of thing, Ferdy, but it looks to me as if you were getting spoiled rotten. You've had a rush of soul to the mouth, Ferdy. Those talcum-powder séances of yours have gone to your head. You take those orgies of refinement too seriously. You begin to look to me like you had a streak of yellow in you, Ferdy . . . and if I ever see it so plain I'm sure of it, I'll leave you flat. I'll quit you, Ferdy, twins and all."

"Quit, then!" cried Mr. Wimple.

And then the harplike voice burst into song again, an offering rich with rage:

"Woman!
So help me all the gods,
I'm through!
Twins or no twins,

Elinor Wimple,
I'm through!
By all the gods,
I'll never wash another dish,
Nor yet another set of underwear!"

And Mr. Wimple, in his heat, brought down the wooden paddle upon the pile of dishes in the sink, in front of his wife. The crash of the broken china seemed to augment his rage, rather than relieve it, and he raised the paddle for a second blow.

"Ferd!" cried his wife, and caught at the stick.

Mr. Wimple, the æsthete, grabbed her by the arm and strove to loosen her grasp upon the paddle.

"You're bruising my arm!" she cried. But she did not release the stick. Neither did Ferdinand release her wrist. Perhaps he twisted it all the harder because she struggled, and was not conscious that he was doing so . . . perhaps he twisted it harder quite consciously. At any rate, she suddenly swung upon him, with her free hand, and slapped him across the face with her wet dishcloth.

At that they started apart, both more than a little appalled to realize that they had been engaged in something resembling a fight.

Without another word the bird of song withdrew to smooth his ruffled plumage. He dressed himself carefully, and left the apartment without speaking to his wife again. He felt that he had not had altogether the best of the argument. There was no taste of soap

in his mouth, for he had washed his lips and even brushed his teeth . . . and yet, psychically, as he might have said himself, he still tasted that dishcloth.

But he had not walked far before some of his complacence returned. He removed his hat and ran his fingers through his interesting hair, and began to murmur lyrically:

"By Jove!
I have a way with women!
There must be something of the Cave Man in me
Yes, something of the primeval!"

In his pocket was a little book of his own poems, bound in green and gold. As he had remarked to Mrs. Wimple, he was to deliver his message that afternoon.

III

Mrs. Watson's apartment (to which Ferdinand betook himself after idling a couple of hours at his club) was toward the top of a tall building which overlooked great fields of city. It was but three blocks distant from Ferdinand's own humbler apartment, in uptown New York, but it was large, and . . . well, Mr. Wimple calculated, harbouring the sordid thought for an instant, that the rent must cost her seven or eight thousand dollars a year.

Mrs. Watson's life was delicately scented with an attar of expense. She would not drench her rooms or her existence with wealth, any more than she would

spill perfume upon her garments with a careless hand. But the sensitive nostrils of the æsthetic Mr. Wimple quivered in reaction to the aroma. For a person who despised gold, as Mr. Wimple professed to despise it, he was strangely unrepelled. Perhaps he thought it to be his spiritual duty to purify this atmosphere with his message.

There were eighteen or twenty women there when Ferdinand arrived, and no man . . . except a weak-eyed captive husband or two, and an epicene creature with a violin, if you want to call them men. Ferdinand, with his bovine body and his leonine head, seemed almost startlingly masculine in this assemblage, and felt so. His spirit, he had often confessed, was an instrument that vibrated best in unison with the subtle feminine soul; he felt it play upon him and woo him, with little winds that ran their fingers through his hair. These were women who had no occupation, and a number of them had money; they felt delightfully cultivated when persons such as Ferdinand talked to them about the Soul. They warmed, they expanded, half unconsciously they projected those breaths and breezes which thrilled our Ferdinand and wrought upon his mood. If a woman, idle and mature, cannot find romance anywhere else or anyhow other she will pick upon a preacher or an artist.

Mrs. Watson collected Ferdinands. Just how seriously she took them—how she regarded himself, specifically—Mr. Wimple could not be quite certain.

"She is a woman of mystery," Mr. Wimple often

murmured to himself. And he wondered a good deal about her . . . sometimes he wondered if she were not in love with him.

He had once written to her a poem, which he entitled "Mystery." She had let him see that she understood it, but she had not vouchsafed a solution of herself. It might be possible, Ferdinand thought, that she did *not* love him . . . but she sympathized with him; she appreciated him; she had even fallen into a dreamy sadness one day, at the thought of how he must suffer from the disharmony in his home. For somehow, without much having been said by one or by the other, the knowledge had passed from Ferdinand to Mrs. Watson that there was not harmony in his home. She had understood. They had looked at each other, and she had understood.

"Alethea!" he had murmured, under his breath. Alethea was her name. He was sure she had heard it; but she had neither accepted it from him, nor rejected it. And he had gone away without quite daring to say it again in a louder tone.

There was only one thing about her that sometimes jarred upon Mr. Wimple . . . a sudden vein of levity. Sometimes Ferdinand, in his thoughts, even accused her of irony. And he was vaguely distrustful of a sense of the humorous in women; whether it took the form of a feeling for nonsense or a talent for sarcasm, it worried him.

But she understood. She always understood . . . him and his message.

And this afternoon she seemed to be understanding him, to be absorbing him and his message, with an increased sensitiveness. She regarded him with a new intentness, he thought; she was taking him with an expanded spiritual capacity.

It was after the music, and what a creature overladen with "art jewelry" called "the eats," harrowing Ferdinand with the vulgar word, that he delivered his message, sitting not far from Mrs. Watson in the carefully graduated light.

It was, upon the whole, a cheerful message, Ferdinand's. It was . . . succinctly . . . Love. Ferdinand was not pessimistic or cynical about Love. It was all around us, he thought, if we could only see it, could only feel it, could only open our beings for its reception.

"If we could only see into the hearts! If we could only see into the homes!" said Ferdinand. If we could only see, it was Ferdinand's belief, we should see Love there, unexpected treasures of Love, waiting dormant for the arousing touch; slumbering, as Endymion slumbered, until Diana's kiss awakened him.

"Mush!" muttered one of the captive husbands to the young violinist. But the young violinist scowled; he was in accord with Ferdinand. "Mush, slush, and gush!" whispered the first captive husband to the second captive husband. But captive husband number two only nodded and grinned in an idiotic way; he was lucky enough to be quite deaf, and no matter where his wife took him he could sit and think of his Lib-

erty Bonds, without being bothered by the lion of the hour. . . .

The world, Ferdinand went on, was trembling on the verge of a great spiritual awakening. The Millennium was about to stoop and kiss it, as Morning kissed the mountain tops. It was coming soon. Already the first faint streaks of the new dawn were in the orient sky . . . for eyes that could see them. Ah, if one could only see! In more and more bosoms, the world around, Love was becoming conscious of itself, Love was beginning to understand that there was love in other bosoms, too! At this point, at least a dozen bosoms, among those bosoms present, heaved with sighs. Heart was reaching out to Heart in a new confidence, Ferdinand said. One knew what was in one's own heart; but hitherto one had often been so blind that one did not realize that the same thing was in the hearts of one's fellows. Ah, if one could only see!

Maeterlinck saw, Ferdinand said.

"Ah, Maeterlinck!" whispered the bosoms.

Yes, Maeterlinck saw, said Ferdinand. Nietzsche, said Ferdinand, had possessed a bosom full of yearning for all humanity, but he had been driven back upon himself and embittered by the world . . . by the German world in which he lived, said Ferdinand. So Nietzsche's strength had little sweetness in it, and Nietzsche had not lived to see the new light in the orient sky.

"Ah, Nietzsche!" moaned several sympathetic bosoms.

Bergson knew, Ferdinand opined. Several of the women present did not quite catch the connection between Bergson and Ferdinand's message, but they assumed that everyone else caught it. Bergson's was a name they knew and . . . and in a moment Ferdinand was on more familiar ground again. Tagore knew, said Ferdinand.

"Ah, Rabindranath Tagore!" And the bosoms fluttered as doves flutter when they coo and settle upon the eaves. Love! That was Ferdinand's message. And it appeared from the remarks with which he introduced and interspersed his own poems, that all the really brilliant men of the day were thinking in harmony with Ferdinand. He had the gift of introducing a celebrated name every now and then in such a manner that these women, who were at least familiar with the names, actually felt that they were also familiar with the work for which the names stood. And, for his part, he was repaid, this afternoon, as he had never been repaid before . . . never before had he been so wrought upon and electrically vivified as to-day by these emanations of the feminine soul; never before had he felt these little winds run their fingers through his hair with such a caressing touch. Once or twice the poignancy of the sensation almost unsteadied him for an instant. And never before had Mrs. Watson regarded him with such singular intentness.

Love! That was Ferdinand's message! And, ah! if one could only see!

When the others were going, Mrs. Watson asked him

to stay a while, and Ferdinand stayed. She led him to a little sitting room, high above the town, and stood by the window. And he stood beside her.

"Your message this afternoon," she said, presently, "I enjoyed more than anything I have ever heard you say before. If we could only see! If we could only see!"

Mrs. Watson lifted her blue eyes to him . . . and for an instant Ferdinand felt that she was more the woman of mystery than ever. For there lurked within the eyes an equivocal ripple of light; an unsteady glint that came and went. Had it not been for her words, Ferdinand might have feared that she was about to break into one of her disconcerting ebullitions of levity. But he perceived in her, at the same time, a certain tension, an unusual strain, and was reassured . . . she was a little strange, perhaps, because of his near presence. She was reacting to the magnetism which was flowing out of him in great waves, and she was striving to conceal from him her psychic excitement. That would account for any strangeness in her manner, any constraint.

"If we could only see!" she repeated.

"*You* always see," hazarded Ferdinand.

"I sometimes see," said Mrs. Watson. "I have sometimes seen more than it was intended for me to see."

What could she mean by that? Ferdinand asked himself. And for an instant he was unpleasantly conscious again of the something ambiguous in her mood. Suddenly she turned and switched on the electric light

in the room, and then went and stood by the window again. Ferdinand's psychic feathers were a trifle rumpled by the action. It was growing dusk . . . but he would have liked to talk to her in the twilight, looking out over the roofs.

"If we could only see into the hearts . . . into the homes," she mused yet again.

"If you could see into my heart now . . . Alethea . . ."

He left the sentence unfinished. She did not look at him. She turned her face so he could not see it.

He tried to take her hand. But she avoided that, without actually moving, without giving ground . . . as a boxer in the ring may escape the full effect of a blow he does not parry by shrugging it off, without retreating.

After a moment's silence she said: "Ferdinand . . ." and paused. . . .

He felt sure of her, then. He drew a long breath. He wished they were not standing by that window, framed in it, with the lighted room behind them . . . but since she *would* stand there . . . anyhow, now was the time. . . .

And then he heard himself pleading with her, eloquently, fervently. She was his ideal! She was . . . he hated the word "affinity," because it had been cheapened and vulgarized by gross contacts . . . but she *was* his affinity. They were made for one another. It was predestined that they should meet and love. She was what he needed to complete him, to

fulfill him. They would go forth together . . . not into the world, but away from it . . . they would dwell upon the heights and . . . and . . . so forth.

Ferdinand, as he pleaded, perhaps thought nothing consciously of the fact that she must be spending money at the rate of fifty or sixty thousand dollars a year. But, nevertheless, that subconscious mind of his, of which he had so often spoken, that subliminal self, must have been considering the figures, for suddenly there flashed before his inner eye the result of a mathematical calculation . . . *fifty thousand dollars a year is the interest on one million dollars at five per cent.* Ah, that would make his dreams possible! How his service to the human race might be increased in value if all his time could be but given to carrying his message! Farewell to the sordid struggle for bread! And in the poetic depths of him there moved, unuttered, a phrase which he had spoken aloud earlier in the day: *"I shall never wash another dish, nor yet another undergarment."* This secondary line of thought, however, did not interfere with the lyric passion of his speech.

"You are asking me to . . . to . . . *elope* with you!"

She still drooped her head, but she let him feel her nearness. He wished—how he wished!—that they were away from that window. But he would not break the spell by suggesting that they move. Perhaps he could not reëstablish it.

"Elope?" Ferdinand critically considered the word.

"I want you to come away with me, Alethea, into Paradise. I want you to help me rediscover Eden! I want you! I want you!"

"But . . . your family?" she murmured.

He had her hand again, and this time she let him keep it. "That episode, that unfortunate and foolish episode, my marriage, is ended," said Ferdinand, as he kissed her hand.

"Ah! Ended?" said Mrs. Watson. "You are no longer living with your wife? The marriage is dissolved?" Mrs. Watson's own marriage had been dissolved for some time; whether by death or by divorce Ferdinand had never taken the trouble to inquire.

"In the spiritual sense—and that is all that counts—dissolved," said Ferdinand. And he could not help adding: "To-day."

Mrs. Watson was breathing quickly . . . and suddenly she turned and put her head on his shoulder. And yet even as Ferdinand's mind cried "Victory!" he was aware of a strange doubt; for when he attempted to take her in his arms, she put up her hands and prevented a real embrace. He stood in perplexity. He felt that she was shaking with emotion; he heard muffled sounds . . . she was sobbing and weeping on his shoulder, or . . .

No! It could not be! Yes, the woman was laughing! Joy? Hysteria? What?

Suddenly she pushed him away from her, and faced him, controlling her laughter.

"Excuse me," said Mrs. Watson, with the levity he

had feared dancing in her eyes, "but such a silly idea occurred to me just as I was about to tell you that I would elope with you . . . it occurred to me that I had better tell you that all my money is tied up in a trust fund. I can never touch anything but the interest, you know."

"Alethea," said Ferdinand, chokingly, "such a thought at a time like this is unworthy of both of us!" And he advanced toward her again. But she stopped him.

"Just a moment, Ferdinand! I haven't told you all of my silly idea! I wondered also, you know, whether, if we ever got hard up and had to do our own work, you would break my dishes with a wooden stick and twist my arm until I howled!"

As Ferdinand slowly took in her words, he felt a sudden recession of vitality. He said nothing, but his knees felt weak, and he sat down on a chair.

"Get up!" said Mrs. Watson, with a cold little silver tinkle of a laugh. "I didn't ask you to sit down!"

Ferdinand got up.

"I don't spy on my neighbours as a rule," continued Mrs. Watson, "but a little after noon to-day I happened to be standing by this window looking out over the town, and this pair of opera glasses happened to be on the table there and . . . well, take them, you oaf! You fat fool! And look at that window, down there! It's your own kitchen window!"

Ferdinand took them and looked . . . he was crushed and speechless, and he obeyed mechanically.

He dropped the glasses with a gasp. He had not only seen into his own kitchen window, lighted as this one was, but he had seen Nell there . . . and, as perverse fate would have it, some whim had inspired Nell to take her own opera glasses and look out over the city. She was standing there with them now. Had she seen him a moment before, with Mrs. Watson's head upon his shoulder?

He started out.

"Wait a moment," said Mrs. Watson. Ferdinand stopped. He still seemed oddly without volition. It reminded him of what he had heard about certain men suffering from shell shock.

"There . . . I wanted to do that before you went," said Mrs. Watson, and slapped him across the face. And Ferdinand's soul registered once more the flavour of a damp dishcloth. "It's the second time a woman has slapped you to-day," said Mrs. Watson. "Try and finish the rest of the day without getting a third one. You can go now."

Ferdinand went. He reached the street, and walked several blocks in silence. Neither his voice nor his assurance seemed to be inclined to return to him speedily. His voice came back first, with a little of his complacence, after fifteen or twenty minutes. And:

"Hell!" said Ferdinand, in his rich, harplike voice, running his fingers through his tawny hair. "Hell!"

HOW HANK SIGNED THE PLEDGE

AUTHOR'S NOTE—Another version of this story appeared in a book entitled "Danny's Own Story," published in 1912 by Doubleday, Page & Co.

I'M NOT so sure about Prohibition and pledges and such things holding back a man that has got the liquor idea in his head. If meanness is in a man, it usually stays in him, in spite of all the pledges he signs and the promises he makes.

About the meanest man I ever knew was Hank Walters, a blacksmith in a little town in Illinois, the meanest and the whiskey-drinkingest. And I had a chance to know him well, for he and his wife Elmira brought me up. Somebody left me on their doorstep in a basket when I was a baby, and they took me in and raised me. I reckon they took me in so they could quarrel about me. They'd lived together a good many years and quarrelled about everything else under the sun, and were running out of topics to row over. A new topic of dissension sort of briskened things up for a while.

Not having any kids of his own to lick, Hank lambasted me when he was drunk and whaled me when he was sober. It was a change from licking his wife, I suppose. A man like Hank has just naturally got to have something he can cuss around and boss, so as to

keep himself from finding out he don't amount to anything . . . although he must have known he didn't, too, way down deep in his inmost gizzards.

So I was unhappy when I was a kid, but not knowing anything else I never found out exactly how unhappy I was. There were worse places to live in than that little town, and there was one thing in our house that I always admired when I was a kid. That was a big cistern. Most people had their cisterns outside their houses, but ours was right in under our kitchen floor, and there was a trap door with leather hinges opened into it right by the kitchen stove. But that wasn't why I was so proud of it. It was because the cistern was full of fish—bullheads and redhorse and sunfish and pickerel.

Hank's father built the cistern. And one time he brought home some live fish in a bucket and dumped them in there. And they grew. And multiplied and refurnished the earth, as the Good Book says. That cistern full of fish had got to be a family custom. It was a comfort to Hank, for all the Walterses were great fish eaters, though it never went to brains any. We fed 'em now and then, and threw the little ones back in until they were grown, and kept the dead ones picked out as soon as we smelled anything wrong, and it never hurt the water any; and when I was a kid I wouldn't have taken anything for living in a house like that.

One time when I was a kid about six years old Hank came home drunk from Bill Nolan's barroom, and got to chasing Elmira's cat, because he said it was making

faces at him. The cistern door was open, and Hank fell in. Elmira wasn't at home, and I was scared. Elmira had always told me not to fool around that cistern door any when I was a kid, for if I fell in there, she said, I'd be a corpse, quicker'n scatt.

So when Hank fell in and I heard him splash, being such a little fellow and awful scared because Elmira had always made it so strong, I supposed that Hank was probably a corpse already. I slammed the door shut over the cistern without looking in, for I heard Hank flopping around down there. I hadn't ever heard a corpse flop before and didn't know but what it might be somehow injurious to me, and I wasn't going to take any chances.

I went out and played in the front yard and waited for Elmira. But I couldn't seem to get my mind settled on playing I was a horse, or anything. I kept thinking of Hank being a corpse down in that cistern. And maybe that corpse is going to come flopping out pretty soon, I thought to myself, and lick me in some new and unusual way. I hadn't ever been licked by a corpse. Being young and innocent, I didn't rightly know what a corpse is, except I had the idea there was something about a corpse that kept them from being popular.

So after a while I sneaked back into the house and set all the flatirons on top of the cistern lid. I heard some flopping and splashing and fluttering, as if that corpse was trying to jump up and was falling back into the water, and I heard Hank's voice, and got scareder and

scareder. When Elmira came along down the road she saw me by the gate crying and blubbering, and she asked me why.

"Hank is a corpse!" says I.

"A corpse!" says Elmira, dropping the pound of coffee she was carrying home from the general store and post-office. "Danny, what do you mean?"

I saw then I was to blame somehow, and I wished I hadn't said anything about Hank being a corpse. And I made up my mind I wouldn't say anything more. So when she grabbed hold of me and asked me again what I meant I blubbered harder, as a kid will, and said nothing. I wished I hadn't set those flatirons on the cistern lid, for it came to me all at once that even if Hank had turned into a corpse I hadn't any right to keep him in the cistern.

Just then old Mis' Rogers, one of our neighbours, came by, while Elmira was shaking me and yelling at me and asking how it happened, and had I seen it, and where was Hank's corpse.

"What's Danny been doing now?" asked Mis' Rogers —me being always up to something.

Elmira turned and saw her and gave a whoop and hollered out: "Hank is dead!" And she threw her apron over her head and sat right down in the path and boo-hooed like a baby. And I bellered and howled all the louder.

Mis' Rogers, she never waited to ask anything more. She saw she had a piece of news, and she wanted to be the first to spread it. She ran right across the road to

where the Alexanderses lived. Mis' Alexander, she saw her coming and unhooked the screen door and Mis' Rogers hollered out before she reached the porch: "Hank Walters is dead!"

And then she went footing it up the street. There was a black plume on her bonnet, nodding the same as on a hearse, and she was into and out of seven front yards in less than five minutes.

Mis' Alexander she ran across the road to where we were, and kneeled down and put her arm around Elmira, who was still rocking back and forth in the path, and she said:

"How do you know he's dead, Elmira? I saw him not more than an hour ago."

"Danny saw it all," says Elmira.

Mis' Alexander turned to me and wanted to know what happened and how it happened and where it happened. But I didn't want to say anything about that cistern. So I busted out crying all over again and I said: "He was drunk and he came home drunk and he did it then, and that's how he did it."

"And you saw him?" she asked.

I nodded.

"Where is he?" says she and Elmira, both together.

But I was scared to say anything about that cistern, so I just bawled some more.

"Was it in the blacksmith shop?" asks Mis' Alexander.

I nodded my head again, and let it go at that.

"Is he in there now?" she wants to know.

I nodded again. I hadn't meant to give out any untrue stories. But a kid will always lie, not meaning particular to lie, if you sort of invite him with questions like that, and get him scared by the way you're acting. Besides, I says to myself, so long as Hank has turned into a corpse, and being a corpse makes him dead, what's the difference whether he's in the blacksmith shop or in the cistern? I hadn't had any plain idea before that being a corpse meant the same thing as being dead. And I wasn't any too sure what being dead was like, either. Except I knew they had funerals over you then. I knew being a corpse must be a disadvantage from the way that Elmira has always said to keep away from that cistern, or I'd be one. And I began to see the whole thing was more important even than I had figured it was at first. I wondered if there'd be a funeral at our house. If there was one, that would be fine. They didn't have them every day in our town, and we hadn't ever had one of our own.

Mis' Alexander, she led Elmira into the house, both a-crying, and Mis' Alexander trying to comfort her, and me a-tagging along behind holding on to Elmira's skirts and sniffling into them. And in a few minutes all those women that Mis' Rogers had told came filing into the house, one at a time, looking sad and mournful. Only old Mis' Primrose, she was a little late getting there, because she stopped to put on the dress she always wore to funerals, with the black Paris lace on to it that her cousin Arminty White had sent her from Chicago.

When they found out that Hank had come home with liquor in him and done it himself they were all excited and they all crowded around and asked me questions, except two that were holding Elmira's hands where she sat moaning in a chair. And those questions scared me and egged me on to lies I hadn't had any idea of telling.

Says one woman: "Danny, you saw him do it in the blacksmith shop?"

I nodded.

"But how did he get in?" says another one. "The door was locked on the outside with a padlock just now when I came by. He couldn't have killed himself in there and then locked the door on the outside."

I didn't see how he could have done that myself, so I began to bawl again and said nothing at all.

"He must have crawled into the shop through that little side window," says Mis' Primrose. "That window was open when I came by, even if the door was locked. Did you see him crawl through the little side window, Danny?"

I nodded. There wasn't anything else I could think of to do.

"But you aren't tall enough to look through that window," sings out Mis' Rogers. "How could you see into the shop, Danny?"

I didn't know, so I didn't say anything at all; I just sniffled.

"There's a store box right in under the window," says another one. "Danny must have climbed on to

that store box and looked in after he saw Hank crawl through the window. Did you scramble on to the store box and look in, Danny?"

I just nodded again.

"And what was it you saw him do? How did he kill himself?" they all asked together.

I didn't know. So I just bellered and boo-hooed some more. Things were getting past anything I could see the way out of.

"He might have hung himself to one of the iron rings in the joists above the forge," says another woman.

"He climbed on to the forge and tied the rope to one of those rings, and tied the other end around his neck, and then he stepped off the forge and swung. Was that how he did it, Danny?"

I nodded. And I bellered louder than ever. I knew that Hank was down in that cistern below the kitchen, a corpse and a mighty wet corpse, all this time; but those women kind of got me to thinking he was hanging out in the blacksmith shop by the forge, too.

Pretty soon one woman says, shivery: "I wouldn't want to have the job of opening the door of the blacksmith shop the first one!"

And they all shivered, and looked at Elmira, and says to let some of the men open that door. And Mis' Alexander says she'll run and get her husband and make him do it. And all the time Elmira sits moaning in that chair. One woman says Elmira ought to have a cup of tea, and she'll lay off her bonnet and go to the kitchen and make it for her. But Elmira says no, she

can't a-bear to think of tea, with poor Hennery hanging out there in the shop. But she was kind of enjoying all that fuss being made over her, too. And all the other women said: "Poor thing!" But most of them were mad because she said she didn't want any tea, for they wanted some and didn't feel free to take it without she took some. They coaxed her and made her see that it was her duty, and she said she'd have some finally.

So they all went out to the kitchen, taking along some of the best room chairs, Elmira coming, too, and me tagging along. The first thing they noticed was those flatirons on top of the cistern lid. Mis' Primrose says that looks funny. But Mis' Rogers says Danny must have been playing with them. "Were you playing they were horses, Danny?"

I was feeling considerable like a liar by this time, but I nodded. I couldn't see any use hurrying things up. I was bound to get a licking pretty soon anyhow. I could always bet on that. So they picked up the flatirons, and as they picked them up there came a splashing noise in the cistern. I thought to myself that Hank's corpse would be out of there in a minute, and then I'd catch it. One woman says: "Sakes alive! What's that noise?"

Elmira says the cistern is full of fish and it must be some of the biggest ones flopping around. If they hadn't been worked up and excited and talking all together and thinking of Hank hanging out in the blacksmith shop they might have suspicioned something,

for that flopping and splashing kept up steady. Maybe I should have mentioned sooner it had been a dry summer and there was only three or four feet of water in the cistern and Hank wasn't in scarcely up to his big hairy chest. When Elmira says the cistern is full of fish that woman opens the trap door and looks in. Hank thinks it's Elmira come to get him out, he says afterward. And he allows he'll keep quiet in there and make believe he is drowned and give her a good scare and make her feel sorry for him.

But when the cistern door was opened he heard a lot of clacking tongues like a hen convention, and he allowed she had told the neighbours, and he'd scare them, too. So he laid low. And the woman that looked in, she sees nothing, for it's as dark down there as the insides of the whale that swallowed Jonah. But she left the door open and went on making tea, and there wasn't scarcely a sound from that cistern, only little ripply noises like it might have been fish.

Pretty soon Mis' Rogers says:

"It has drawed, Elmira; won't you have a cup?"

Elmira kicked some more, but she took hers. And each woman took hers. And one woman, a-sipping of hers, she says:

"The departed had his good points, Elmira."

Which was the best thing had been said of Hank in that town for years and years.

Old Mis' Primrose, she always prided herself on being honest, no matter what come of it, and she ups and says:

"I don't believe in any hypocritics at a time like

this, any more'n any other time. The departed wasn't any good, and the whole town knows it, and Elmira ought to feel like it's good riddance of bad rubbish, and such is my sentiments and the sentiments of truth and righteousness."

All the other women sings out: "W'y, Mis' Primrose, I never!" But down in underneath more of 'em agreed than let on to. Elmira she wiped her eyes and says:

"Hennery and me had our troubles, there ain't any use denying that, Mis' Primrose. It has often been give and take between us and betwixt us. And the whole town knows he has lifted his hand against me more'n once. But I always stood up to Hennery and I fit him back, free and fair and open. I give him as good as he sent on this earth and I ain't the one to carry a mad beyond the grave. I forgive Hennery all the orneriness he did to me, and there was a lot of it, as is becoming to a church member, which he never was."

All the women but Mis' Primrose says: "Elmira, you *have* got a Christian sperrit!" Which did her a heap of good, and she cried considerable harder, leaking out tears as fast as she poured tea in. And each one present tried to think up something nice to say about Hank, only there wasn't much they could say. And Hank in that cistern, listening to every word of it.

Mis' Rogers, she says: "Before he took to drinking like a fish, Hank Walters was as likely a lookin' young feller as ever I see."

Mis' White, she says: "Well, Hank he never was

a stingy man, anyhow. Often and often White has told me about seeing Hank treating the crowd down in Nolan's saloon just as come-easy, go-easy as if it wasn't money he'd ought to have paid his honest debts with."

They sat there that way telling of what good points they could think of for ten minutes, and Hank hearing it and getting madder and madder all the time. By and by Tom Alexander came busting into the house.

"What's the matter with all you women?" he says. "There's nobody hanging in that blacksmith shop. I broke the door down and went in, and it's empty."

There was a pretty howdy-do, then, and they all sing out:

"Where's the corpse?"

Some thinks maybe someone has cut it down and taken it away, and all gabbled at once. But for a minute or two no one thought that maybe little Danny had been egged on to tell lies. And little Danny ain't saying a word. But Elmira grabbed me and shook me and said:

"You little liar, what do you mean by that story of yours?"

I thought that licking was about due then. But whilst all eyes were turned on me and Elmira, there came a voice from the cistern. It was Hank's voice, but it sounded queer and hollow, and it said:

"Tom Alexander, is that you?"

Some of the women screamed, for they thought it

was Hank's ghost. But Mis' Primrose says: "What would a ghost be doing in a cistern?"

Tom Alexander laughed and yelled down into the cistern: "What in blazes you want to jump in there for, Hank?"

"You darned ijut!" said Hank, "you quit mocking me and get a ladder, and when I get out'n here I'll learn you to ask me what I wanted to jump in here for!"

"You never saw the day you could do it," says Tom Alexander, meaning the day Hank could lick him. "And if you feel that way about it you can stay down there, for all of me. I guess a little water won't hurt you any, for a change." And he left the house.

"Elmira," sings out Hank, mad and bossy, "you go get me a ladder!"

But Elmira, her temper rose up, too, all of a sudden.

"Don't you dare order me around like I was the dirt under your feet, Hennery Walters," she says.

Hank fairly roared, he was so mad. "When I get out'n here," he shouted, "I'll give you what you won't forget in a hurry! I heard you a-forgivin' me and a-weepin' over me! And I won't be forgive nor weeped over by no one! You go and get that ladder!"

But Elmira only answered: "You was drunk when you fell in there, Hank Walters. And you can stay in there till you get a better temper on to you." And all the women laughed and said: "That's right, Elmira! Spunk up to him!"

There was considerable splashing around in the water for a couple of minutes. And then, of a sudden, a

live fish came a-whirling out of that hole in the floor, which he catched with his hands. It was a big bullhead, and its whiskers around its mouth was stiffened into spikes, and it landed kerplump on to Mis' Rogers' lap, a-wiggling, and it horned her on the hands. She was that surprised she fainted. Mis' Primrose, she got up and licked the fish back into the cistern and said, right decided:

"Elmira Walters, if you let Hank out of that cistern before he's signed the pledge and promised to jine the church, you're a bigger fool than I take you for. A woman has got to make a stand!"

And all the women sing out: "Send for Brother Cartwright! Send for Brother Cartwright!"

And they sent me scooting down the street to get him quick. He was the preacher. I never stopped to tell but two or three people on the way to his house, but they must have spread the news quick, for when I got back with him it looked like the whole town was at our house.

It was along about dusk by this time, and it was a prayer meeting night at the church. Mr. Cartwright told his wife to tell the folks that came to the prayer meeting he'd be back before long, and to wait for him. But she really told them where he'd gone, and what for.

Mr. Cartwright marched right into our kitchen. All the chairs in the house was in there, and the women were talking and laughing, and they had sent to the Alexanderses for their chairs, and to the Rogerses for theirs. Every once in a while there would be an awful

burst of language come rolling up from the hole where that unregenerate old sinner was cooped up.

I have travelled around considerable since those days, and I have mixed up along with many kinds of people in many different places, and some of them were cussers to admire. But I never heard such cussing before or since as old Hank did that night. He busted his own records and he rose higher than his own water marks for previous years. I wasn't anything but a little kid then, not fit to admire the full beauty of it. They were deep down cusses that came from the heart. Looking back at it after these years, I can well believe what Brother Cartwright said himself that night—that it wasn't *natural* cussing, and that some higher power, like a demon or an evil sperrit, must have entered into Hank's human carcase and given that terrible eloquence to his remarks. It busted out every few minutes, and the women would put their fingers into their ears until a spell was over. And it was personal, too. Hank would listen till he heard a woman's voice he knew, and then he would let loose on her family, going back to her grandfathers and working downward to her children's children.

Brother Cartwright steps up to the hole in the floor and says gentle and soothing like an undertaker when he tells you where to sit at a home funeral:

"Brother Walters! Oh, Brother Walters!"

"Brother!" yelled Hank, "don't ye brother me, you snifflin', psalm-singin', yaller-faced, pigeon-toed hyppercrit, you! Get me a ladder, gol dern ye, and I'll

mount out o'here and learn ye to brother me, I will!" Only that wasn't anything to what Hank really said; no more like than a little yellow fluffy canary is like a turkey buzzard.

"Brother Walters," said the preacher, calm but firm, "we have all decided that you aren't going to get out of that cistern until you sign the pledge."

Then Hank told him what he thought of him and pledges and church doings, and it wasn't pretty. He said if he was as deep in the eternal fire of hell as he was in rain water, and every fish that nibbled at his toes was a devil with a red-hot pitchfork sicked on by a preacher, they could jab at him until the whole hereafter turned into icicles before he'd sign anything that a man like Mr. Cartwright gave him to sign. Hank was stubborner than any mule he ever nailed shoes on to, and proud of being that stubborn. That town was a most awful religious town, and Hank knew he was called the most unreligious man in it, and he was proud of that, too; and if any one called him a heathen it just plumb tickled him all over.

"Brother Walters," says the preacher, "we are going to pray for you."

And they did it. They brought all the chairs close up around the cistern door, in a ring, and they all knelt down there with their heads on the chairs and prayed for Hank's salvation. They did it up in style, too, one at a time, and the others singing out, "Amen!" every now and then, and they shed tears down on to Hank.

The front yard was crowded with men, all laughing and talking and chawing and spitting tobacco, and betting how long Hank would hold out. Si Emery, that was the city marshal, and always wore a big nickel-plated star, was out there with them. Si was in a sweat, because Bill Nolan, who ran the saloon, and some more of Hank's friends were out by the front fence trying to get Si to arrest the preacher. For they said that Hank was being gradually murdered in that water and would die if he was held there too long, and it would be a crime. Only they didn't come into the house amongst us religious folks to say it. But Si, he says he don't dare to arrest anybody, because Hank's house is just outside the village corporation line; he's considerable worried about what his duty is, not liking to displease Bill Nolan.

Pretty soon the gang that Mrs. Cartwright had rounded up at the prayer meeting came stringing along in. They had brought their hymn books with them, and they sung. The whole town was there then, and they all sung. They sung revival hymns over Hank. And Hank, he would just cuss and cuss. Every time he busted out into another cussing spell they would start another hymn. Finally the men out in the front yard began to warm up and sing, too, all but Nolan's crowd, and they gave Hank up for lost and went back to the barroom.

The first thing they knew they had a regular old-fashioned revival meeting going there, and that preacher was preaching a regular revival sermon. I've

been to more than one camp meeting, but for just naturally taking hold of the whole human race by the slack of the pants and dangling of it over hell fire, I never heard that sermon equalled. Two or three old backsliders in the crowd came right up and repented all over again. The whole kit-and-biling of them got the power, good and hard, and sung and shouted till the joints of the house cracked and it shook and swayed on its foundations. But Hank, he only cussed. He was obstinate, Hank was, and his pride and dander had risen up.

"Darn your ornery religious hides," he says, "you're takin' a low-down advantage of me, you are! Let me out on to dry land, and I'll show you who'll stick it out the longest, I will!"

Most of the folks there hadn't had any suppers, so after all the sinners but Hank had either got converted or sneaked away, some of the women said why not make a kind of a love feast of it, and bring some victuals, like they do at church sociables. Because it seemed that Satan was going to wrestle there all night, like he did with the angel Jacob, and they ought to be prepared. So they did it. They went and they came back with things to eat and they made hot coffee and they feasted that preacher and themselves and Elmira and me, right in Hank's hearing.

And Hank was getting pretty hungry himself. And he was cold in that water. And the fish were nibbling at him. And he was getting cussed out and weak and soaked full of despair. There wasn't any way for him

to sit down and rest. He was scared of getting cramps in his legs and sinking down with his head under water and being drowned.

He said afterward he would have done the last with pleasure if there had been any way of starting a lawsuit for murder against that gang. So along between ten and eleven o'clock that night he sings out:

"I give in, gosh dern ye, I give in! Let me out and I'll sign your pesky pledge!"

Brother Cartwright was for getting a ladder and letting him climb out right away. But Elmira said:

"You don't know him like I do! If he gets out before he's signed the pledge, he'll never do it."

So Brother Cartwright wrote out a pledge on the inside leaf of the Bible, and tied it on to a string, and a pencil on to another string, and let them down, and held a lantern down, too, and Hank made his mark, for he couldn't write. But just as Hank was making his mark that preacher spoke some words over Hank, and then he said:

"Now, Henry Walters, I have baptized you, and you are a member of the church."

You might have thought that Hank would have broken out into profanity again at that, for he hadn't agreed to anything but signing the pledge. But he didn't cuss. When they got the ladder and he climbed up into the kitchen, shivering and dripping, he said serious and solemn to Mr. Cartwright:

"Did I hear you baptizing me in that water?"

Mr. Cartwright said he had.

"That was a low-down trick," said Hank. "You knowed I always made my brags that I'd never jined a church and never would. You knowed I was proud of that. You knowed it was my glory to tell it, and that I set a heap of store by it, in every way. And now you've gone and took that away from me! You've gone and jined me to the church! You never fought it out fair and square, man strivin' to outlast man, like we done with the pledge, but you sneaked it on to me when I wasn't lookin'!"

And Hank always thought he had been baptized binding and regular. And he sorrowed and grieved over it, and got grouchier and meaner and drunkener. No pledge nor no Prohibition could hold Hank. He was a worse man in every way after that night in the cistern, and took to licking me harder and harder.

ACCURSED HAT!

I REQUEST of you a razor, and you present me with this implement! A safety razor! One cannot gash oneself with your invention. Do you think I rush to your apartment with the desire to barber myself? No, *milles diables*, no! I 'ave embrace you for my friend, and you mock at my despair. This tool may safely abolish the 'air from the lip of the drummer when the train 'ave to wiggle, but it will not gash the jugular; it will not release the bluest blood of France that courses through one's veins.

Oui, I will restrain myself. I will 'ave a drink. *Merci!* I will make myself of a calmness. I will explain.

Yes, it is a woman. What else? At the insides of all despair it is a woman ever. That is always the—the—w'at you call 'im?—the one best bet.

Listen. I love 'er. She own the 'ouse of which I am one of the lodgers, in'abiting the chamber beneath the skylight. She is a widow, and I love 'er. Of such a roundness is she!—and she 'ave the restaurant beyond the street. Of such a beauty!—and 'er 'usband, who was a Monsieur Flanagan, 'e leave 'er w'at you call well fix with life-insurance. So well fix, so large, so brilliant of the complexion, so merry of the smile, so

competent of the ménage, of such a plumpness! 'Ow should it be that one did not love 'er?

But she? Does she smile on the 'andsome Frenchman who in'abit 'er skylight chamber and paint and paint and paint all day long, and sell, oh, so little of 'is paintings? *Hélas!* She scarcely know that 'e exist! She 'ave scarcely notice 'im. 'Ow is genius of avail? W'at is wit, w'at is gallantry, w'at is manner —w'at is all these things w'en one does not possess the—the—w'at you call 'im?—the front? *Hélas!* I love, but I 'ave not the front! My trousers are all of a fringe at the bottom, and my collars are all of a frowsiness at the top. My sleeves are of such a shine! And my 'at——

Ten thousand curses for the man that invented 'ats! You are my friend—'ave you a pistol? Yes, I will be calm. I will 'ave a drink. I will restrain myself. *Merci,* monsieur.

My sleeves are of a sleekness; and my 'at—— My 'at, I look at 'im. 'E is—w'at you call 'im?—on the boom! I contemplate 'im sadly. I regard 'im with reproach. 'E is ridiculous. 'E look like 'e been kicked. With such a 'at, who can enact the lover? With such a 'at, who can win 'imself a widow? I fly into a rage. I tear from my 'air. I shake my fist at the nose of fate. I become terrible. I dash my 'at upon the floor, and jump upon 'im with fury. Then I look at 'im with 'atred. 'E look back at me with sorrow in 'is wrinkles. And, *Voilà!*—as I look at 'im I 'ave a thought. The 'at, 'e straighten out from my jump. W'en my feet is

off, 'e rise a little way from 'is wrinkles where I crush 'im. 'E lift 'imself slowly like a jack-in-the-box up from 'is disgrace. And I 'ave an idea.

Monsieur, we Frenchmen are a people of resource!

I take my thought to an agent of the advertising profession. I say I 'ave come to the place where I am willing to degrade my genius for gold. I wish to eat more often. I wish to marry the widow I love. I will forget my art; I will make some dollars; I will degrade myself temporarily. The agent of advertising 'e say 'e 'ave no need of any degradation, to take 'im somewhere else. But I explain, and behold! I am engaged to go to work. They furnish me with clothes of a design the most fashionable, and with a 'at of which I am myself the architect, and I go to work. I 'ate it, but I go to work.

The manner of my work is this. The 'at, 'e does it all. (*Accursed 'at!*) 'E is so built that on the outside 'e look like any other silk 'at. But 'e 'ave 'is secrets. 'E 'ave 'is surprises. On 'is inside there is a clockwork and a spring. At intervals 'e separate 'imself in two in the middle, and the top part of 'im go up in the air, slowly, one inch, two inch, three inch, four inch, five inch, six inch—like a telescope that open 'imself out. And w'at 'ave we then? *Voilà!* We 'ave a white silk place, and on it is printed in grand letters:

YOU ARE TOO FAT!
DR. BLINN
WILL MAKE YOU THIN

You see, my friend? It is now my profession, every afternoon for three hours, to join the promenade; to display my 'at; to make fast in the minds of the people 'ow fortunate a discovery is the anti-fat of Monsieur Blinn.

Monsieur, I am always the gentleman. Am I forced into a vulgar rôle? Well, then, there is something about me that redeems it from vulgarity. I am a movable advertisement, but none the less I am an advertisement of dignity. Those clothes they furnish, I 'ave made under my own direction. I adorn my foot in the most poetical of boots. Only a Frenchman might 'ave created my coat. My trousers are poems. I am dressed with that inspiration of elegance which only a man of my imagination might devise.

Monsieur, I am always the artist. That 'at, I nevaire let 'im go up with a pop like a jacking-jump. 'E is not to startle the most sensitive of ladies. W'en 'e arise, 'e arise slowly. 'E is majestic in 'is movement. 'E ascend with gravity. 'E go up with dignity.

For three hours each day, I thus set aside my finer emotions. And all the town smile; and many 'undreds rush to buy the anti-fat of Monsieur Blinn. 'Ow is it that the Widow Flanagan——

Curses upon the perfidy of woman! Do not 'old me, I say! Let me go! I will leap from your window to the stones below! Well, I will restrain myself. Yes, I will 'ave a drink. *Merci!*

'Ow is it that the Widow Flanagan does not perceive that I thus make of my 'ead a billboard three hours

each day? Monsieur, all Frenchmen are of an originality w'en driven to it by fate, and not the least of them am I! To 'er I am still the poor but 'andsome artist. It is in the parlours of the agent of advertising that I dress myself, I don the 'at, each day. I wear before my eyes a thick spectacles; I 'ide my black 'air beneath a gray wig; I 'ave shave my own beard and each day put on moustache and royal of a colour the same with the wig. There is no danger that the grave foreigner, so courteous, so elegant, so much the statesman, who condescend to advertise the anti-fat of Monsieur Blinn, shall be—shall be—w'at you call 'im?—spotted by the Widow Flanagan. She does not connect 'im with the 'andsome artist who in'abit 'er skylight chamber. To do so would be to kill my 'opes. For love is not to be made ridiculous.

I prosper. I 'ave money each week. I eat. I acquire me some clothes which are not the same with those worn by the employee of Monsieur Blinn. I buy me a silk 'at which 'ave no clockwork in 'is inside. I acquire the—w'at you call 'im?—the front. I dine at the café of the Widow Flanagan beyond the street. I chat with the Widow Flanagan w'en I pay my check. Monsieur, the Widow Flanagan at las' know the 'andsome Frenchman exist! The front, 'e work like a charm. 'E give the genius beneath 'im the chance to show w'at 'e can do. The front, 'e make—'ow you call 'im?—'e make good.

'Ave I said enough? You are my friend; you see me, w'at I am. Is it possible that the Widow Flanagan

should look upon me and not be of a flutter throughout? I 'ave said enough. She see me; she love me. With women, it is always so!

The day is name; we will marry. Already I look forward to the time that I am no longer compelled to the service of the anti-fat of Monsieur Blinn. Already I indulge my fancy in my 'appiness with the beautiful Widow Flanagan, whose 'usband 'ave fortunately die and leave 'er so ver' well fix. But, *hêlas!*

Grasp me! Restrain me! Again my grief 'ave overpower! 'Ave you a rough-on-rats in the 'ouse? 'Ave you a poison? Yes, you are my friend. Yes, I will restrain myself. Yes, I will 'ave a drink. *Merci!*

The day is name. The day arrive. I 'ave shave. I 'ave bathe. I am 'appy. I skip; I dance; I am exalt; all the morning I 'um a little tune—O love, love, love! And such a widow—so plump and so well fix!

The wedding is at the 'ome of Madame Flanagan. Meantime, I am with a friend. The hour approach. The guests are there; the priest is there; the mother of the Widow Flanagan, come from afar, is there. We arrive, my friend and me. It is at the door that we are met by the mother of the Widow Flanagan. It is at the door she grasp my 'and; she smile, and then, before I 'ave time to remove my 'at——

Accursed 'at! Restrain me! I will do myself a mischief! Well, yes, I will be calm. I will 'ave a drink. *Merci,* my friend.

I see 'er face grow red. She scream. She lift 'er and as if to strike me. She scream again. I know

not w'at I must think. The Widow Flanagan she 'ear 'er mother scream. She rush downstairs. I turn to the Widow Flanagan, but she 'as no eyes for me. She is gazing on my 'at. Monsieur, then I know. I 'ave got the wrong one in dressing; and I feel that accursed thing are lifting itself up to say to my bride and her mother:

YOU ARE TOO FAT!
DR. BLINN
WILL MAKE YOU THIN

And be'ind the Widow Flanagan and 'er mother come crowding fifty guests, and everyone 'as seen my 'at make those remarks! Accursed widow! The door is slam in my face! I am jilted!

Ah, laugh, you pigs of guests, laugh, till you shake down the dwelling of the Widow Flanagan! Were it not that I remember that I once loved you, Madame Flanagan, that 'ouse would now be ashes.

Monsieur, I 'ave done. I 'ave spoken. Now I will die. 'Ave you a rope? Well, I will calm myself. *Oui,* I will 'ave a drink. *Merci,* monsieur!

ROONEY'S TOUCHDOWN

"Football," said Big Joe, the friendly waiter, laying down the sporting page of my paper with a reminiscent sigh, "ain't what it was twenty years ago. When I played the game it was some different from wood-tag and pump-pump-pull-away. It's went to the dogs."

"Used to be a star, huh?" said I. "What college did you play with, Joe?"

"No college," said Joe, "can claim me for its alma meter."

He seated himself comfortably across the table from me, as the more sociably inclined waiters will do in that particular place. "I don't know that I ever was a star. But I had the punch, and I was as tough as that piece of cow you're trying to stick your fork into. And I played in one game the like of which has never been pulled off before or since."

"Tell me about it," said I, handing him a cigar. Joe sniffed and tasted it suspiciously, and having made sure that it wasn't any brand sold on the premises, lighted it. There was only one other customer, and it was near closing time.

"No, sir," he said, "it wasn't any kissing game in my day. Ever hear of a place called Kingstown, Illinois? Well, some has and some hasn't. It's a burg of about

five thousand souls and it's on the Burlington. Along about the time of the Spanish war it turned out a football team that used to eat all them little colleges through there alive.

"The way I joined was right unexpected to me. I happened into the place on a freight train, looking for a job, and got pinched for a hobo. When they started to take me to the lock-up I licked the chief of police and the first deputy chief of police, and the second deputy, but the other member of the force made four, and four was too many for me. I hadn't been incarcerated ten minutes before a pleasant looking young fellow who had seen the rumpus comes up to the cell door with the chief, and says through the bars:

" 'How much do you weigh?'

" 'Enough,' says I, still feeling sore, 'to lick six long-haired dudes like you.'

" 'Mebby,' says he, very amiable, 'mebby you do. And if you do, I've got a job for you.'

"He was so nice about it that he made me ashamed of my grouch.

" 'No offence meant,' says I. 'I only weigh 230 pounds now. But when I'm getting the eats regular I soon muscles up to 250 stripped.'

" 'I guess you'll do,' says he, 'judging by the fight you put up. We need strength and carelessness in the line.'

" 'What line is that?' says I, suspicious.

" 'From now on,' says he, 'you're right tackle on the Kingstown Football Team. I'm going to get you a job with a friend of mine that runs a livery stable, but

your main duty will be playing football. Are you on?'

"'Lead me to the training table,' says I. And he paid me loose and done it.

"This fellow was Jimmy Dolan, and he had once played an end on Yale, and couldn't forget it. He and a couple of others that had been off to colleges had started the Kingstown Team. One was an old Michigan star, and the other had been a half-back at Cornell. The rest of us wasn't college men at all, but as I remarked before, we were there with the punch.

"There was Tom Sharp, for instance. Tom was thought out and planned and preforedestinated for a centre rush by Nature long before mankind ever discovered football. Tom was about seventeen hands high, and his style of architecture was mostly round about. I've seen many taller men, but none more circumferous as to width and thickness. Tom's chest was the size and shape of a barrel of railroad spikes, but a good deal harder. You couldn't knock him off his feet, but if you could have, it wouldn't have done you any good, for he was just as high one way as he was another—and none of it idle fat. Tom was a blacksmith during his leisure hours, and every horse and mule for miles around knowed him and trembled at his name. He had never got hold of nothing yet that was solid enough to show him how strong he was.

"But the best player was a big teamster by the name of Jerry Coakley. Jerry was between six and eight feet high, and to the naked eye he was seemingly all bone. He weighed in at 260 pounds *ad valorem,* and he was

the only long bony man like that I ever seen who could get himself together and start quick. Tom Sharp would roll down the field calm and thoughtful and philosophic, with the enemy clinging to him and dripping off of him and crumpling up under him, with no haste and no temper, like an absent-minded battleship coming up the bay; but this here Jerry Coakley was sudden and nefarious and red-headed like a train-wreck. And the more nefarious he was, the more he grinned and chuckled to himself.

"For two years that team had been making a reputation for itself, and all the pride and affection and patriotism in the town was centred on to it. I joined on early in the season, but already the talk was about the Thanksgiving game with Lincoln College. This Lincoln College was a right sizable school. Kingstown had licked it the year before, and there were many complaints of rough play on both sides. But this year Lincoln had a corking team. They had beat the state university, and early in the season they had played Chicago off her feet, and they were simply yearning to wipe out the last year's disgrace by devastating the Kingstown Athletic Association, which is what we called ourselves. And in the meantime both sides goes along feeding themselves on small-sized colleges and athletic associations, hearing more and more about each other, and getting hungrier and hungrier.

"Things looked mighty good for us up to about a week before Thanksgiving. Then one day Jerry Coakley turned up missing. We put in 48 hours hunting

him, and at the end of that time there was a meeting of the whole chivalry and citizenry of Kingstown in the opery hall to consider ways and means of facing the public calamity. For the whole town was stirred up. The mayor himself makes a speech, which is printed in full in the Kingstown *Record* the next day along with a piece that says: 'Whither are we drifting?'

"Next day, after practice, Jimmy Dolan is looking pretty blue.

" 'Cheer up,' says I, 'Jerry wasn't the whole team.'

" 'He was about a fifth of it,' says Captain Dolan, very sober.

" 'But the worst was yet to come. The very next day, at practice, a big Swede butcher by the name of Lars Olsen, who played right guard, managed to break his ankle. This here indignity hit the town so hard that it looked for a while like Lars would be mobbed. Some says Lars has sold out to the enemy and broke it on purpose, and the Kingstown *Record* has another piece headed: 'Have we a serpent in our midst?'

"That night Dolan puts the team in charge of Berty Jones, the Cornell man, with orders to take no risks on anything more injurious than signal practice, and leaves town. He gets back on Wednesday night, and two guys with him. They are hustled from the train to a cab and from the cab to the American House, and into their rooms, so fast no one gets a square look at them.

"But after dinner, which both of the strangers takes in their rooms, Dolan says to come up to Mr. Breitt-mann's room and get acquainted with him, which the

team done. This here Breittmann is a kind of Austro-Hungarian Dutchman looking sort of a great big feller, with a foreign cast of face, like he might be a German baron or a Switzer waiter, and he speaks his language with an accent. Mr. Rooney, which is the other one's name, ain't mentioned at first. But after we talk with the Breittmann person a while Jimmy Dolan says:

" 'Boys, Mr. Rooney has asked to be excused from meeting any one to-night, but you'll all have an opportunity to meet him to-morrow—after the game.'

" 'But,' says I, 'Cap, won't he go through signal practice with us?'

"Dolan and Breittmann, and Berty Jones, who was our quarterback and the only one in the crowd besides Dolan who had met Mr. Rooney, looked at each other and kind of grinned. Then Dolan says: 'Mr. Breittmann knows signals and will run through practice with us in the morning, but not Mr. Rooney. Mr. Breittmann, boys, used to be on the Yale scrub.'

" 'Dem vas goot days, Chimmie,' says this here Breittmann, 'but der naturalist, Chimmie, he is also the good days. What?'

"The next day, just before the game, I got my first glimpse of this Rooney when he come downstairs with Breittmann and they both piled into a cab. He wore a long overcoat over his football togs, and he had so many headpieces and nose guards and things on to him all you could see of his face was a bit of reddish looking whisker at the sides.

" 'He's Irish by the name,' says I, 'and the way he

carries them shoulders and swings his arms he must have learned to play football by carrying the hod.' He wasn't a big man, neither, and I thought he handled himself kind of clumsy.

"When we got out to the football field and that Lincoln College bunch jumped out of their bus and began to pass the ball around, the very first man we see is that there Jerry Coakley.

"Yes, sir, sold out!

"Dolan and me ran over to the Lincoln captain.

" 'You don't play that man!' says Dolan, mad as a hornet, pointing at Jerry. Jerry, he stood with his arms crossed, grinning and chuckling to himself, bold as Abraham Lincoln on the burning deck and built much the same.

" 'Why not?' says the college captain, 'he's one of our students.'

" 'Him?' says I. 'Why, he's the village truck-driver here!' And that there Jerry had the nerve to wink at me.

" 'Mr. Coakley matriculated at Lincoln College a week ago,' says the captain, Jerry he grinned more and more, and both teams had gathered into a bunch around us.

" 'Matriculated? Jerry did?' says Jimmy Dolan. 'Why, it's all Jerry can do to write his name.'

" 'Mr. Coakley is studying the plastic arts, and taking a special course in psychology,' says the captain.

" 'Let him play, Dolan,' says Tom Sharp. 'Leave him to me. I'll learn him some art. I'll fix him!'

" 'O, you Tom!' says Jerry, grinning good-natured.

" 'O, you crook!' says Tom. And Jerry, still grinning good-natured, hands Tom one. It took the rest of the two teams to separate them, and they both started the game with a little blood on their faces. We made no further kick about Jerry playing. All our boys wanted him in the game. 'Get him!' was the word passed down the line. And after that little mix-up both sides was eager to begin.

"We kicked off. I noticed this here Rooney person got down after the kick-off rather slow, sticking close to his friend Breittmann. He was at left tackle, right between Breittmann at guard, and Dolan, who played end.

"Jerry, he caught the kick-off and come prancing up the field like a prairie whirlwind. But Dolan and me got to him about the same time, and as we downed him Tom Sharp, quite accidental, stepped on to his head with both feet.

" 'Foul!' yells the referee, running up and waving his hand at Tom Sharp. 'Get off the field, you! I penalize Kingstown thirty yards for deliberate foul play!'

"But Jerry jumped up—it took more'n a little thing like that to feaze Jerry—and shoved the referee aside.

" 'No, you don't put him out of this game,' says Jerry. 'I want him in it. I'll put him out all right!'

"Then there was a squabble, that ended with half of both teams ordered off the field. And the upshot of which was that everybody on both sides agreed to abolish all umpires and referees, and get along without any

penalties whatever, or any officials but the time-keeper. No, sir, none of us boys was in any temper by that time to be interfered with nor dictated to by officials.

"Bo, what followed wasn't hampered any by technicalities. No, sir, it wasn't drop the handkerchief. There wasn't any Hoyle or Spalding or Queensberry about it. It was London prize ring, *savate,* jiu juitsi and Græco-Roman, all mixed up, with everybody making his own ground rules. The first down, when Tom Sharp picked up that Lincoln College Captain and hit Jerry Coakley over the head with him, five Lincoln College substitutes give a yell and threw off their sweaters and run on to the field. Then we heard another yell, and our substitutes come charging into the fray and by the end of the first half there was eighteen men on each side, including three in citizens' clothes who were using brass knucks and barrel staves."

Joe paused a moment, dwelling internally upon memories evidently too sweet for words. Then he sighed and murmured: "No, sir, the game ain't what it was in them days. Kick and run and forward pass and such darned foolishness! Football has went to the dogs!

"Well," he resumed, flexing his muscles reminiscently, "neither side wasted any time on end runs or punts. It was punch the line, and then punch the line some more, and during the first ten minutes of play the ball didn't move twenty yards either way from the centre of the field, with a row on all the time as to whose ball it ought to be. As a matter of fact, it was whoever's could keep his hands on to it.

"It was the third down before I noticed this fellow Rooney particular. Then our quarterback sent a play through between guard and tackle. It was up to Rooney to make the hole for it.

"As the signal was give, and the ball passed back, Breittmann laid his arm across Rooney's shoulders, and I heard him say something in Dutch to him. They moved forward like one man, not fast, but determined like. A big college duffer tried to get through Rooney and spill the play. This here Rooney took him around the waist and slammed him on to the ground with a yell like a steamship that's discovered fire in her coal bunkers, and then knelt on the remains, while the play went on over 'em. I noticed Breittmann had a hard time getting Rooney off of him. They carried the fellow off considerably sprained, and two more Lincoln College fellows shucked their wraps and run in to take his place.

"The very next play went through the same hole, only this time the fellow that went down under Rooney got up with blood soaking through his shoulder padding and swore he'd been bit. But nobody paid any attention to him, and the Lincoln boys put Jerry Coakley in opposite Rooney.

" 'You cross-eyed, pigeon-toed Orangeman of a hod-carrier, you,' says Jerry, when we lined up, trying to intimidate Rooney, 'I'll learn you football.'

"But Rooney, with his left hand hold of Breittmann's, never said a word. He just looked sideways up at Breittmann like he was scared, or mebby shy, and Breittmann said something in Dutch to him.

"That play we made five yards, and we made it through Jerry Coakley, too, Mr. Rooney officiating. When Breittmann got his friend off Jerry, Jerry set up and tried to grin, but he couldn't. He felt himself all over, surprised, and took his place in the line without saying a word.

"Then we lost the ball on a fumble, which is to say the Lincoln centre jumped on to Tom Sharp's wrists with both feet when he tried to pass it, and Jerry Coakley grabbed it. The first half closed without a score, with the ball still in the centre of the field.

"The second half, I could see right away, Jerry Coakley had made up his mind to do up Rooney. The very first play Lincoln made was a guard's back punch right at Rooney. I reckon the whole Lincoln team was in that play, with Jerry Coakley in the van.

"We got into it, too. All of us," Joe paused again, with another reflective smile. Pretty soon he continued.

"Yes, sir, that was some scrimmage. And in the midst of it, whoever had the ball dropped it. But for a minute, nobody seemed to care. And then we discovered that them unsportsmanlike Lincoln College students had changed to baseball shoes with metal spikes between the halves. We hadn't thought of that.

"After about a minute of this mauling, clawing mess, right out of the midst of it rolled the ball. And then came this here Rooney crawling after it—*crawling* I say!—on his hands and feet.

"He picked it up and straightened himself.

"'Run, Rooney, run!' says I. And he had a clear

field. But he didn't seem to realize it. He just tucked that ball under one arm, and ambled.

"Half a dozen of us fell in and tried to make interference for him—but he wouldn't run; he just dog-trotted, slow and comfortable. And in a second Jerry Coakley sifted through and tackled him.

"Rooney stopped. Stopped dead in his track, as if he was surprised. And then, using only one hand—only one hand, mind you—he picked that there Jerry Coakley up, like he was an infant, give him one squeeze, and slung him. Yes, sir, Jerry was all sort of crumpled up when he lit!

"And he kept on, slow and easy and gentle. The Lincoln gang spilled the interference. But that didn't bother Rooney any. Slow and certain and easy he went down that field. And every time he was tackled he separated that tackler from himself and treated him like he had Jerry.

"Yes, sir, he strung behind him ten men out of the nineteen players Lincoln College had in that game, as he went down the field. From where I was setting on top of the Lincoln centre rush, I counted 'em as he took 'em. Slow and solemn and serious like an avenging angel, Mr. Rooney made for them goal posts, taking no prisoners, and leaving the wounded and dead in a long windrow behind him. It wasn't legalized football, mebby, but it was a grand and majestic sight to see that stoop-shouldered feller with the red whiskers proceeding calmly and unstoppably forward like the wrath of God.

"Yes, sir, the game was ours. We thought it was, leastways. All he had to do was touch that there ball to the ground! The whole of Kingstown was drawing in its breath to let out a cheer as soon as he done it.

"But it never let that yell. For when he reached the goal——"

Here Joe broke off again and chuckled.

"Say," he said, "you ain't going to believe what I'm telling you now. It's too unlikely. I didn't believe it myself when I seen it. But it happened. Yes, sir, that nut never touched the ground with the ball!

"Instead, with the ball still under one arm, he climbed a goal post. Climbed it, I tell you, with both legs and one arm. And setting straddle of that cross bar believe me or not, be began to shuck. In front of all that crowd, dud after dud, he shucked.

"And there wasn't no cheers then, for in a minute there he set, *a monkey!* Yes, sir, the biggest blamed monkey you ever seen, trying to crack that football open on a goal post under the belief that it was a cocoanut. Monkey, did I say? Monkey ain't any word for it! He was a regular ape; he was one of these here orang-outang baboons! Yes, sir, a regular gosh-darned Darwinian gorilla!"

Joe took a fresh light for his cigar, and cocked his eye again at my sporting supplement. "I notice," he said, sarcastically, "Princeton had a couple of men hurt yesterday in the Yale game. Well, accidents is bound to happen even in ring-around-the-rosy or prisoner's base. What?"

TOO AMERICAN

"Is IT a real English cottage?" we asked the agent suspiciously, "or is it one that has been hastily aged to rent to Americans?"

It was the real thing: he vouched for it. It was right in the middle of England. The children could walk for miles in any direction without falling off the edge of England and getting wet.

"See here!" I said. "How many blocks from Scotland is it?"

"Blocks from Scotland?" He didn't understand.

"Yes," I said, "blocks from Scotland." I explained. My wife and I had been trying to get a real English accent. That was one of the things we had come to England for. We wanted to take it back with us and use it in Brooklyn, and we didn't want to get too near Scotland and get any Scottish dialect mixed up with it. It seemed that the cottage was quite a piece from Scotland. There was a castle not far away—the fifteenth castle on the right side as you go into England. When there wasn't any wind you didn't get a raw sea breeze or hear the ocean vessels whistle.

"Is it overgrown with ivy," asked Marian, my wife.

Yes, it was ivy-covered. You could scarcely see it

for ivy—ivy that was pulling the wall down, ivy as deep-rooted as the hereditary idea.

"Are the drains bad?" I asked.

They were. There would be no trouble on that score. What plumbing there was, was leaky. The roof leaked. There was neither gas nor electricity, nor hot and cold water, nor anything else.

"I suppose the place is rather damp?" I said to the agent. "Is it chilly most of the time? Are the flues defective? Are the floors uneven? Is the place thoroughly uncomfortable and unsanitary and unhabitable in every particular?"

Yes, it had all these advantages. I was about to sign the lease when my wife plucked me by the sleeve in her impulsive American way. "Is there a bathroom?" she asked.

"My dear Mrs. Minever," said the agent with dignity, "there is not. I can assure you that there are no conveniences of any kind. It is a real English cottage."

I took the place. It was evening of the third day after we took possession that I discovered that we had been taken in. All the other Americans in that part of England were sitting out in front of their cottages trying to look as if they were accustomed to them, and we—my wife and Uncle Bainbridge and I—were sitting in front of ours trying to act as English as we knew how, when a voice hailed me.

"You are Americans, aren't you, sir?" said the voice.

The voice was anyhow; so we shamefacedly confessed.

"I thought you looked like it," said the voice, and its owner came wavering toward us through the twilight.

"What makes you think we look like it?" I said, a trifle annoyed; for it had been my delusion that we had got ourselves to looking quite English—English enough, at least, so that no one could tell us in the faint light.

"Our clothes don't fit us, do they?" asked my wife nervously.

"They can't fit us," said I; "they were made in London."

I spoke rather sharply, I suppose. And as I was speaking, a most astonishing thing happened—the person I had been speaking to suddenly disappeared. He was, and then he was not! I sprang up, and I could tell from my wife's exclamation that she was startled, too. As for Uncle Bainbridge, he seldom gives way to emotion not directly connected with his meals or his money.

"Here, you!" I called out loudly, looking about me.

The figure came waveringly into view again.

"Where did you go to?" I demanded. "What do you mean by acting like that? Who are you, anyhow?"

"Please, sir," said the wavery person, "don't speak so crosslike. It always makes me vanish. I can't help it, sir."

He continued timidly:

"I heard a new American family had moved here and I dropped by to ask you, sir, do you need a ghost?"

"A ghost! Are you——"

"Yes, sir," with a deprecating smile. "Only an American ghost; but one who would appreciate a situation all the more, sir, for that reason. I don't mind telling you that there's a feeling against us American ghosts here in England, and I've been out of a place for some time. Maybe you have noticed a similar feeling toward Americans? I'm sure, sir, you must have noticed a discrimination, and——"

"Don't say 'sir' all the time," I told him.

"Beg pardon, sir," he rejoined: "but it's a habit. I've tried very hard to fit myself to English ways and it's got to be second nature, sir. My voice I can't change; but my class—I was a barber in America, sir—my class I have learned. And," he repeated rather vacantly, "I just dropped by to see if you wanted a ghost. Being fellow Americans, you know, I thought——" His voice trailed off into humble silence, and he stood twisting a shadowy hat round and round in his fingers.

"See here!" I said. "Should we have a ghost?"

"Beg pardon, sir, but how much rent do you pay?" I told him.

He answered politely but with decision, "Then, sir, in all fairness, you are entitled to a ghost with the place. It gives a certain tone, sir."

"Why weren't we given one, then?" I asked

"Well——" he said, and paused. If a ghost can blush with embarrassment, he blushed. "You see," he went on, making it as easy for me as he could, "English ghosts mostly object to haunting Americans, just

as American ghosts find it difficult to get places in English houses and cottages. You see, sir, we are——" He halted lamely, and then finished, "We're so *American* somehow, sir."

"But we've been cheated!" I said.

"Yes, sir," said the American ghost, "regularly *had*." He said it in quite an English manner, and I complimented him on his achievement. He smiled with a child's delight.

"Would I do?" he urged again, with a kind of timid insistence.

My sympathies were with him. "You don't mind children?" I said. "We have two."

"No," he replied; "leastways, if they aren't very rough, I am not much frightened of them."

"I guess," I began, "that——" I was about to say that he would do, when my wife interrupted me.

"We do not want a ghost at all," she said firmly.

"But, my dear——"

She raised her eyebrows at me, and I was silent. After looking from one to the other of us wistfully for a moment, the applicant turned and drifted away, vanishing dejectedly when he reached the gate.

"You heard what he said, Henry?" said my wife as he disappeared. "It is lucky that you have me by you! Do you want to saddle yourself with an American ghost? For my part, I will have an English ghost or none!"

I realized that Marian was right; but I felt sorry for the ghost.

"What did—the fellow—want?" roared Uncle Bainbridge, who is deaf, and brings out his words two or three at a time.

"Wanted to know—if we wanted—a ghost!" I roared in reply.

"Goat? Goat? Huh-huh!" shouted Uncle Bainbridge. "No, sir! Get 'em a pony—and a cart—little cart! That's the best—thing—for the kids!"

Uncle Bainbridge is, in fact, so deaf that he is never bothered by the noises he makes when he eats. As a rule when you speak to him he first says, "How?" Then he produces a kind of telephone arrangement. He plugs one end into his ear, and shoves a black rubber disk at you. You talk against the disk, and when he disagrees with you he pulls the plug out of his ear to stop your foolish chatter, and snorts contemptuously. Once my wife remarked to me that Uncle Bainbridge's hearing might be better if he would only cut those bunches of long gray hair out of his ears. They annoy every one except Uncle Bainbridge a great deal. But the plug was in, after all, and he heard her, and asked one of the children in a terrible voice to fetch him the tin box he keeps his will in.

Uncle Bainbridge is *my* uncle. My wife reminds me of that every now and then. And he is rather hard to live with. But Marian, in spite of his little idiosyncrasies, has always been generous enough to wish to protect him from designing females only too ready to marry him for his money. So she encourages him to make his home with us. If he married at all, she

preferred that he should marry her cousin, Miss Sophia Calderwod. That was also Miss Sophia's preference.

We did get a ghost, however, and a real English ghost. The discovery was mine. I was sitting in the room we called the library one night, alone with my pipe, when I heard a couple of raps in, on, about, or behind a large bookcase that stood diagonally across one corner. It was several days after we had refused the American applicant, and I had been thinking of him more or less, and wondering what sort of existence he led. One half the world doesn't know how the other half lives. I suppose my reflections had disposed my mind to psychic receptivity; for when I heard raps I said at once:

"Are there any good spirits in the room?" It is a formula I remembered from the days when I had been greatly interested in psychic research.

Rap! rap! came the answer from behind the bookcase.

I made a tour of the room, and satisfied myself that it was not a flapping curtain, or anything like that.

"Do you have a message for me?" I asked.

The answer was in the affirmative.

"What is it?"

There was a confused and rapid jumble of raps. I repeated the question with the same result.

"Can you materialize?"

The ghost rapped no.

Then it occurred to me that probably this was a ghost of the sort that can communicate with the visible world only through replying to such questions as can be an-

swered by yes or no. There are a great many of these ghosts. Indeed, my experience in psychic research has led me to the conclusion that they are in the majority.

"Were you sent down by the agent to take this place?" I asked.

"No!" It is impossible to convey in print the suggestion of hauteur and offended dignity and righteous anger that the ghost managed to get into that single rap. I have never felt more rebuked in my life; I have never been made to feel more American.

"Sir or madam," I said, letting the regret I felt be apparent in my voice, "I beg your pardon. If you please, I should like to know whose ghost you are. I will repeat the alphabet. You may rap when you wish me to stop at a letter. In that way you can spell out your information. Is that satisfactory?"

It was.

"Who are you?"

Slowly, and with the assured raps of one whose social position is defined, fixed, and secure in whatever state of existence she may chance to find herself, the ghost spelled out, "Lady Agatha Pelham."

I hope I am not snobbish. Indeed, I think I have proved over and over again that I am not, by frankly confessing that I am an American. But at the same time I could not repress a little exclamation of pleasure at the fact that we were haunted by the ghost of a member of the English aristocracy. You may say what you will, but there is a certain something—a manner—an air—I scarcely know how to describe it, but it is there;

it exists. In England, one meets it so often—I hope you take me.

My gratification must have revealed itself in my manner. Lady Agatha rapped out, if anything with more haughtiness than she had previously employed—yes, even with a touch of defiance:

"I was at one time a governess."

I gradually learned that while her own family was as good as the Pelham family, Lady Agatha's parents had been in very reduced circumstances, and she had had to become a governess. When Sir Arthur Pelham had married her, his people acted very nasty. He hadn't any money, and they had wanted him to marry some. He got to treating her very badly before he died. And during his lifetime, and after it, Lady Agatha had had a very sad life indeed. Still, you know, she was an aristocrat. She made one feel that as she told her story bit by bit. For all this came very gradually, as the result of many conversations, and not at once. We speedily agreed upon a code, very similar to the Morse telegraphic code, and we still further abbreviated this, until our conversations, after a couple of weeks, got to be as rapid as that of a couple of telegraph operators chatting over the wires. I intimated that it must be rather rough on her to be haunting Americans, and she said that she had once lived in our cottage and liked it.

In spite of her aristocracy, I don't suppose there ever was a more domestic sort of ghost than Lady Agatha. We all got quite fond of her, and I think she did of us, too, in spite of our being American. Even the chil-

dren got into the habit of taking their little troubles and perplexities to her. And Marian used to say that with Lady Agatha in the house, when Uncle Bainbridge and I happened to be away, she felt so *safe* somehow.

I imagine the fact that she had once been a governess would have made it rather difficult for Lady Agatha in the house of an English family of rank. On the other hand, her inherent aristocratic feeling made it quite impossible for her to haunt any one belonging to the middle or lower classes. She could haunt us, as Americans, and not feel that the social question mattered so much, in spite of what the American ghost had hinted. We Americans are so unclassified that the English often take chances with individuals, quite regardless of what each individual's class would naturally be if he had a class. Even while they do this they make us feel very often that we are hopelessly American; but they do it, and I, for one, am grateful. Lady Agatha sympathized with our desire to become as English as possible, she could quite understand that. I find that many Englishmen approve the effort, although remaining confident that it will end in failure.

Lady Agatha helped us a great deal. We used to have lessons in the evenings in the library. For instance, the children would stand at attention in front of the bookcase, and repeat a bit of typical English slang, trying to do it in an absolutely English way. They would do it over and over and over, until finally Lady Agatha would give a rap of approval. Or I would

pretend that I was an Englishman in a railway carriage, and that an American had just entered and I was afraid he would speak to me. I got rather good at this, and made two or three trips to London to try it out. I found that Americans were imposed on, and actually in one instance I made one Englishman think that I was an Englishman who thought he was an American. He was a nobody, however, and didn't really count. And then, I am afraid, I spoiled it all. We Americans so often spoil it all! I enjoyed it so that I told him. He looked startled and said, "But how American!" He was the only Englishman I ever fooled.

But Lady Agatha's night classes were of great benefit to us. We used to practise how to behave toward English servants at country houses, and how to act when presented at court, and dozens of things like that: not that we had been asked to a country house, or expected to be presented at court soon. Marian and I had agreed that the greater part of this information would be quite useless while Uncle Bainbridge was still spared to us. Even in Brooklyn Uncle Bainbridge had been something of a problem at times. But we thought it just as well to prepare ourselves for the sad certainty that Uncle Bainbridge would pass into a better world before many years.

Uncle Bainbridge, who is very wealthy indeed, affects more informality than the usual self-made man. He used to attend our evening classes with a contemptuous expression upon his face, and snort at intervals. Once he even called me "Puppy!" Then he thrust his tele-

phone arrangement before my face and insisted that I tell him whether I was sane or not.

"Puppy!" he bellowed. "Quit apin' the English! I get along with 'em myself—without any nonsense! Treat 'em white! Always treat me white! No foolishness! Puppy!"

My wife and I soon discovered that Lady Agatha and Uncle Bainbridge were on the most friendly terms. He would sit for hours in the library, with his telephone receiver held patiently near the bookcase, shouting questions and smiling and nodding over the answers. Marian and I were afraid that Uncle Bainbridge, by his lack of polish, might offend Lady Agatha. And at first it was her custom to hover about anxiously while they were talking to each other. But Uncle Bainbridge discovered this, and resented it to such an extent that she had to be cautious indeed.

His talks with Lady Agatha became longer and longer, and more and more frequent, until finally he received more of her attention than all the rest of us put together. Indeed, we need not have worried about Uncle Bainbridge's offending Lady Agatha: the friendship grew closer and closer. We were certain finally that it was taking on a strong tinge of sentimentality. One day my wife stopped me just outside the library door and said in a whisper, indicating the general direction of Lady Agatha's bookcase with a wave of her hand:

"Henry, those two old things in there are calling each other Hiram and Agatha!"

I listened, and it was so. A week later I heard Uncle Bainbridge seated by the bookcase, bellowing out a sentimental song. He was having a great deal of difficulty with it, and in order that he might hear himself he was singing with the black disk arrangement held directly in front of his own mouth.

I cannot say that Uncle Bainbridge became etherealized by the state of his feelings toward Lady Agatha, whatever the exact state of his feeling may have been. But he did change a little, and the change was for the better. He cut out the bunches of gray hair from his ears, and he began to take care of his fingernails. Lady Agatha was having a good influence upon him.

One day, as he and I were standing by the front gate, he suddenly connected himself for speech and roared at me, with a jerk of his thumb toward the house.

"Fine woman!"

"Who?" I shouted back.

"Aggie."

"Why, yes. I suppose she—was."

"No nonsense!" he yelled. "Husband was a brute! Marry her myself! In a minute—if possible. Ain't possible! Shame! Bet she could make—good dumplings—apple dumplings! Huh!"

Uncle Bainbridge is very fond of apple dumplings. His final test of a woman is her ability to make good apple dumplings. Several women might have married him had they been able to pass that examination. He can pay no higher compliment to a woman than to be willing to believe her able to make good dumplings.

"Aggie, in there!" he roared again, impatient because I was slow in answering. "Dumplings! That kind of woman—could have made—good dumplings!"

I felt, somehow, that it was going a bit too far to imagine Lady Agatha at so plebeian a task as making apple dumplings.

"Uncle Bainbridge," I shouted, "the upper classes—in England—can't make—apple dumplings!"

Even as I shouted I was aware that some bypasser, startled at our loud voices, was pausing just outside the gate. I turned to encounter for a moment the haughty glare of the most English-looking elderly woman I have ever seen. She had a large, high nose, and she was a large, high-looking handsome woman generally. She said no word to me; but as she stared her lips moved ever so slightly. I fancied that to herself she said, "Indeed!" I have never felt more utterly superfluous, more abjectly American. She turned from me with an air that denied my existence, a manner that indicated that such things as I *could not* exist, and it would be foolish to try to make her believe they did exist. She bowed to Uncle Bainbridge, smiled as he returned her bow, and passed on. Uncle Bainbridge's eyes followed her admiringly.

"'Nother fine woman!" he thundered, so that she must have heard him. "Friend of mine! Sensible woman! No frills!"

I tried to ask him who she was, when and where he had become acquainted with her, and a dozen other questions; but Uncle Bainbridge unplugged himself,

cutting off all communication with the outer world, and resolutely refused any information. That he should know the lady did not surprise me, however. It had happened several times since we had been in England that Uncle Bainbridge had become friendly with people whom we did not know. We never got from him any exact idea as to the social status of these persons, and indeed we always found that he had no really definite ideas on that subject to communicate.

Our dear Lady Agatha was almost the only English friend my wife and I had made.

My wife and I were very well contented that Uncle Bainbridge's feeling for Lady Agatha should grow stronger and stronger. We argued that while he was so intimately friendly with dear Lady Agatha he would not be so likely to fall a prey to any person who might want to marry him for his wealth. So we decided to encourage the friendship in every way possible, and would have been only too glad to have it go on indefinitely.

"I feel so at peace about Uncle Bainbridge now," was the way my wife expressed it, "with him and dear Lady Agatha so wrapped up in each other."

But this cheerful condition of affairs was not destined to last many weeks. One day my wife received a letter from her cousin, Miss Sophia Calderwood. Cousin Sophia was in London, and would be with us on the coming Saturday. She had spoken of the possibility of paying us a visit while we were in England, and of

course we had urged her to do so; although at the time the possibility had seemed rather remote to us.

Miss Sophia was past her first youth, but still very girlish at times. Under her girlishness there was a grim determination. She had made up her mind to marry Uncle Bainbridge. My wife, as I have already said, had been inclined to favour the idea, since it would keep strangers from getting hold of Uncle Bainbridge's money. But now that Uncle Bainbridge and Lady Agatha were getting along so well together my wife had begun to hope that Uncle Bainbridge would never marry anybody. We both thought the friendship might become an ideal, but none the less overmastering, passion; one of those sacred things, you know, of the sort that keeps a man single all his life. If Uncle Bainbridge remained unmarried out of regard for Lady Agatha, we agreed, it would be much better for him at his time of life than to wed Miss Sophia.

So we both considered Miss Sophia's visit rather inopportune. Not that we felt that Uncle Bainbridge was predisposed toward her. On the contrary, he had always manifested more fear than affection for her. But, I repeat, she was a determined woman. The quality of her determination needed no better evidence than the fact that she had, to put it vulgarly, pursued her quarry across the seas. It was evident that the citadel of Uncle Bainbridge's heart was to undergo a terrible assault. As for him, when he heard she was coming, he only emitted a noncommittal snort.

Miss Sophia, when she arrived, had apparently put

in the months since we had seen her in resolute attempts at rejuvenation. She was more girlish than I had known her in fifteen years. And she had set up a lisp. She greeted Uncle Bainbridge impulsively, effusively.

"You dear man," she shrilled into his telephone, "you don't detherve it, but gueth what I've brought you all the way acroth the ocean! A new rethipe for apple dumplings!"

"How?" said Uncle Bainbridge. "What say?" And when she repeated it he said "Umph!" disconnected himself, and blew his nose loudly. He rarely said anything to her but "Umph!" walking away afterward with now and then a worried backward glance.

When we told Miss Sophia about Lady Agatha, and she finally understood the intimacy that had grown up between Lady Agatha and Uncle Bainbridge, she looked reproachfully at my wife, as if to say, "You have been a traitor to my cause!" And then she announced very primly, quite forgetting her lisp, "I am quite sure that I, for one, do not care to make the acquaintance of this person!"

"Cousin Sophia," said my wife sharply, "what do you mean by that?"

"I think, Cousin Marian, that my meaning is sufficiently clear."

"You forget," rejoined my wife icily, "that dear Lady Agatha is our guest."

Miss Sophia sniffed, and was silent.

"Besides," continued Marian, "what can you possibly have against her?"

"Marian," said Miss Sophia, "will you answer me one question?"

"Perhaps, Cousin Sophia."

"Cousin Marian, where, I ask you, *where* is Sir Arthur Pelham?"

"Why, how should I know, Cousin Sophia?" My wife was genuinely puzzled by the question, and so was I.

"Exactly!" And Miss Sophia's voice was acid. "How should you know? I imagine it is a point upon which Lady Agatha Pelham, under the circumstances, has not been very communicative."

"But, Cousin Sophia——" I began.

She interrupted me. "Cousin Henry," she said, "do you mean to say that you approve of these goings-on in your house? The idea of a married woman entering into a perfectly open flirtation with a man, as this Lady Agatha Pelham has done! Not that I blame Hiram Bainbridge; for men are susceptible when skillfully practised upon—especially with arts which I have never stooped to employ. It is shameless, Cousin Henry, shameless! If Cousin Marian's mother were alive, she would at least see that the children were sent back to America before they become contaminated by this atmosphere. Cousin Henry, to think that you have been so corrupted by European ways already that you acquiesce in this anomalous relationship!"

"I should hardly call it that, Cousin Sophia," I ventured, "and for the life of me I cannot see anything wrong."

It took me a little while to catch Miss Sophia's point of view. I am bound to say that she presented it rather convincingly. If Sir Arthur had been alive, she said, she would have seen nothing wrong in Lady Agatha forming any ties she might choose in the spirit world. Or if Sir Arthur had been in the spirit world and Lady Agatha in the earth life, she would have exonerated Lady Agatha from any indelicacy in forming a close friendship with Uncle Bainbridge. But since both Sir Arthur and Lady Agatha were in the spirit life, Lady Agatha's place was with Sir Arthur.

"Aristocrat or not," she said, "she is indelicate, she is unladylike, she is coarse, or she would not carry on in this fashion with a man to whom she is not married."

"I will not have dear Lady Agatha insulted!" said my wife, white with anger, rising from the chair in which she had been sitting.

"It is I who have been insulted, by being asked to a house where such a brazen and indecent affair is accepted as a matter of course," said Cousin Sophia.

I hastily interposed. I saw that my wife was about to cast prudence to the winds and tell Miss Sophia that if she felt that way about it she might as well leave. Miss Sophia is very well-to-do herself, and my wife is her only near relation. I did not fear that the rupture would be permanent; for I had known Marian and Cousin Sophia to go quite this far many times before, and, indeed, in an hour they had both apparently got over their temper.

Miss Sophia, although certain now that she would

receive no assistance from my wife in her siege of Uncle Bainbridge, did not swerve from her determination to subjugate him. I imagine it is rather difficult to give battle when your rival is a ghost: the very intangibility of the tie makes it hard to attack. Yet the person who is in the earth life has certain advantages also. I do not know whether I have mentioned it or not, but Miss Sophia could scarcely be called beautiful. One after another, all her life, she had seen men upon whom she had set her affection become the husbands of other women, and in her duel with the ghost there was a quality of desperation that made the struggle, every move of which I watched, extremely interesting. In spite of her announcement that she did not care to meet Lady Agatha, she learned the code by which she communicated with us, and did not absent herself from our gatherings in the library.

Miss Sophia must have been desperate indeed, or she would not have resorted to the trick she used. About a week after Miss Sophia's arrival Lady Agatha suddenly ceased to communicate with us. We grew alarmed, wondering what could have happened to her, as the days passed and the friendly rappings were not resumed. In the light of what happened later I am sure that Miss Sophia deliberately drove Lady Agatha away. What method she used I do not know. But if she had said to Lady Agatha directly the things that she had said to us about her, the insult would have been quite sufficient to make that proud and gentle spirit take her departure. Likely Miss Sophia got into com-

munication with Lady Agatha and hurled at her the bitter question, "Where is Sir Arthur Pelham?" Lady Agatha was not the person to enter into any vulgar quarrel, nor yet to vouchsafe explanations concerning her personal affairs.

Several days after Lady Agatha fell silent I heard Uncle Bainbridge bellowing forth questions in the library. I was outside the house near the library window, which was open. Thinking joyously that Lady Agatha had returned to us, I stepped nearer to the window to make sure. I saw at once, as I peeped in, that the bookcase, which set very near the window, had been slightly moved. Miss Sophia, who was very thin, had managed to introduce herself into the triangular space behind it—I had mentioned that it set diagonally across one corner. She was crouched upon the floor rapping out a conversation with Uncle Bainbridge—impersonating Lady Agatha! Uncle Bainbridge, in front of the bookcase, was apparently unsuspicious; nor did Miss Sophia suspect that I saw her through the half-inch of window that commanded her hiding place.

"You must marry!" rapped Miss Sophia, in the character of Lady Agatha.

"Who?" bellowed Uncle Bainbridge.

"Miss Sophia Calderwood," said the fake ghost.

"Aggie, I'm hanged if I do!" yelled Uncle Bainbridge. "Ask me—something—easy!"

"Hiram, listen carefully," began the false Lady Agatha. Then she told him that this would be their

last interview. Circumstances over which she had no control compelled her to depart. She was to assume another phase of existence upon another plane. She could not explain to him so that he would understand. But her interest in him would never flag. And she knew that he would be happier wedded to some good woman. It was apparent to her that Miss Sophia would make him the ideal wife. He would soon learn to love Miss Sophia. She had considerable difficulty in getting the promise; but finally Uncle Bainbridge snorted out a pledge that he would marry, and stumped away.

That night he went to London. It was a week before he returned. I did not communicate what I had seen and heard to Marion. The truth was, I felt rather sorry for Miss Sophia. To resort to such a trick she must have been desperate indeed. I tried to imagine what her life had been, and not condemn her too harshly. And besides, if she was to marry Uncle Bainbridge, which seemed settled now, I did not care to have her aware that I knew her secret.

During the absence of Uncle Bainbridge she became quietly radiant, as befits one who knows that the battle is won. She was evidently certain that he would speak definitely upon his return.

The night that he came back he gathered us all about him in the library. "Something to say! Important!" he shouted.

We all assumed attitudes of attention.

"Thinking maybe—get married!" said Uncle Bain-

bridge. It was just like Uncle Bainbridge to announce the matter in the lady's presence before having formally asked her; but I felt that it was a trifle hard on Miss Sophia. But a glance at her reassured me on that score. She was flushed; but it was the flush of triumph rather than the flush of embarrassment.

"Bought a brewery!" said Uncle Bainbridge. "Good brewery! Good beer! Like English beer! Like English people!"

I felt that this was a little irrelevant, and I am sure that Miss Sophia felt the same way.

"Bought a castle!" said Uncle Bainbridge, warming to the work. "Fine castle! Like castles! Fix it up! Live in it! Settle here! Like England! Fine country."

"A castle! Oh, how lovely!" shrilled Miss Sophia, clapping her hands girlishly. "How lovely for all of us!"

"Not invited!" roared Uncle Bainbridge, taking us all in with one sweeping gesture. "None of you!"

There was silence for a moment.

"Going to get married!" said Uncle Bainbridge, rising to his feet. "Not Sophia! Caught Sophia—behind bookcase! Knew all the time! Sneaky trick! Marry fine woman! Henry saw her—over the fence that day! Fine woman! Curate's mother here! Dumplings! Fine dumplings! Learned to make 'em for me! She don't want—to get too thick—with any my relations! She says—all of you—are too American!"

And as Uncle Bainbridge blew his nose loudly and sat down there was a sudden rattle of rapping from the

bookcase: nothing so articulate as a remark in the code, but a sound more like a ripple of well-bred laughter. This was the last we ever heard from Lady Agatha, and I have sometimes wondered just what she meant by it. It is so hard, sometimes, to understand just what the English are laughing at.

THE SADDEST MAN

THE bench, the barrel, and the cracker box in front of Hennery McNabb's general store held three men, all of whom seemed to be thinking. Two of them were not only thinking but chewing tobacco as well. The third, more enterprising than the other two, more active, was exerting himself prodigiously. He was thinking, chewing tobacco, and whittling all at the same time.

Two of the men were native and indigenous to Hazelton. They drew their sustenance from the black soil of the Illinois prairie on which the little village was perched. They were as calm and placid as the growing corn in the fields round about, as solid and self-possessed and leisurely as the bull-heads in the little creek down at the end of Main Street.

The third man was a stranger, somewhere between six and eight feet high and so slender that one might have expected the bones to pop through the skin, if one's attention had not been arrested by the skin itself. For he was covered and contained by a most peculiar skin. It was dark and rubbery-looking rather than leathery, and it seemed to be endowed with a life of its own almost independent of the rest of the man's anatomy. When a fly perched upon his cheek he did not raise his hand to brush it off. The man himself did not move at all

But his skin moved. His skin rose up, wrinkled, twitched, rippled beneath the fly's feet, and the fly took alarm and went away from there as if an earthquake had broken loose under it. He was a sad-looking man. He looked sadder than the mummy of an Egyptian king who died brooding on what a long dry spell lay ahead of him.

It was this third man of whom the other two men were thinking, this melancholy stranger who sat and stared through the thick, humid heat of the July day at nothing at all, with grievous eyes, his ego motionless beneath the movements of his rambling skin. He had driven up the road thirty minutes before in a flivver, had bought some chewing tobacco of Hennery McNabb, and had set himself down in front of the store and chewed tobacco in silence ever since.

Finally Ben Grevis, the village grave-digger and janitor of the church, broke through the settled stillness with a question:

"Mister," he said, "you ain't done nothing you're afraid of being arrested for, hev you?"

The stranger slowly turned his head toward Ben and made a negative sign. He did not shake his head in negation. He moved the skin of his forehead from left to right and back again three or four times. And his eyebrows moved as his skin moved. But his eyes remained fixed and melancholy.

"Sometimes," suggested Hennery McNabb, who had almost tired himself out whittling, "a man's system needs overhaulin', same as a horse's needs drenchin'. I

don't aim to push my goods on to no man, but if you was feelin' anyway sick, inside or out, I got some of Splain's Liniment for Man and Beast in there that might fix you up."

"I ain't sick," said the stranger, in a low and gentle voice.

"I never seen many fellers that looked as sad as you do," volunteered Ben Grevis. "There was a mighty sad-lookin' tramp, that resembled you in the face some, was arrested here for bein' drunk eight or nine years ago, only he wasn't as tall as you an' his skin was different. After Si Emery, our city marshal, had kep' him in the lock-up over Sunday and turned him loose again, it come to light he was wanted over in I'way for killin' a feller with a piece of railroad iron."

"I ain't killed anybody with any railroad iron over in I'way," said the lengthy man. And he added, with a sigh: "Nor nowheres else, neither."

Hennery McNabb, who disagreed with everyone on principle—he was the Village Atheist, and proud of it—addressed himself to Ben Grevis. "This feller ain't nigh as sad-lookin' as that tramp looked," said Hennery. "I've knowed any number of fellers sadder-lookin' than this feller here."

"I didn't say this feller here was the saddest-lookin' feller I ever seen," said Ben Grevis. "All I meant was that he is sadder-lookin' than the common run of fellers." While Hennery disagreed with all the world, Ben seldom disagreed with any one but Hennery. They would argue by the hour, on religious matters, always

beginning with Hennery's challenge: "Ben Grevis, tell me just one thing if you can, *where* did Cain get his wife?" and always ending with Ben's statement: "I believe the Book from kiver to kiver."

The tall man with the educated skin—it was educated, very evidently, for with a contraction of the hide on the back of his hand he nonchalantly picked up a shaving that had blown his way—spoke to Ben and Hennery in the soft and mild accents that seemed habitual to him:

"Where did you two see sadder-lookin' fellers than I be?"

"Over in Indianny," said Hennery, "there's a man so sad that you're one of these here laughin' jackasses 'longside o' him."

And, being encouraged, Hennery proceeded.

This here feller (said Hennery McNabb) lived over in Brown County, Indianny, but he didn't come from there original. He come from down in Kentucky somewheres and his name was Peevy, Bud Peevy. He was one of them long, lank fellers, like you, stranger, but he wasn't as long and his skin didn't sort o' wander around and wag itself like it was a tail.

It was from the mountain districts he come. I was visitin' a brother of mine in the county-seat town of Brown County then, and this Bud Peevy was all swelled up with pride when I first knowed him. He was proud of two things. One was that he was the champeen corn-licker drinker in Kentucky. It was so he give

himself out. And the other thing he was prouder yet of. It was the fact, if fact it was, that he was the Decidin' Vote in a national election—that there election you all remember, the first time Bryan run for President and McKinley was elected.

This here Bud Peevy, you understand, wasn't really sad when I first knowed him: he only *looked* sad. His sadness that matched his innard feelin's up to his outward looks come on to him later. He was all-fired proud when I first knowed him. He went expandin' and extendin' of himself around everywheres tellin' them Indianny people how it was him, personal, that elected McKinley and saved the country from that there free-silver ruination. And the fuller he was of licker, the longer he made this here story, and the fuller, as you might say, of increditable strange events.

Accordin' to him, on that election day in 1896 he hadn't planned to go and vote, for it was quite a ways to the polls from his place and his horse had fell lame and he didn't feel like walkin'. He figgered his district would go safe for McKinley, anyhow, and he wouldn't need to vote. He was a strong Republican, and when a Kentuckian is a Republican there ain't no stronger kind.

But along about four o'clock in the afternoon a man comes ridin' up to his house with his horse all a lather of foam and sweat, and the horse was one of these here Kentucky thoroughbred race horses that must 'a' travelled nigh a mile a minute, to hear Bud Peevy tell of it, and that horse gives one groan like a human bein' and

falls dead at Bud Peevy's feet afore the rider can say a word, and the rider is stunned.

But Bud Peevy knowed him for a Republican county committeeman, and he poured some corn licker down his throat and he revived to life again. The feller yells to Bud as soon as he can get his breath to go to town and vote, quick, as the polls will close in an hour, and everybody else in that district has voted but Bud, and everyone has been kep' track of, and the vote is a tie.

It's twelve miles to the pollin' place from Bud's farm in the hills and it is a rough country, but Bud strikes out runnin' acrost hills and valleys with three pints of corn licker in his pockets for to refresh himself from time to time. Bud, he allowed he was the best runner in Kentucky, and he wouldn't 'a' had any trouble, even if he did have to run acrost mountains and hurdle rocks, to make the twelve miles in an hour, but there was a lot of cricks and rivers in that country and there had been a gosh-a-mighty big rain the night before and all them cricks had turned into rivers and all them rivers had turned into roarin' oceans and Niagara catarac's. But Bud, he allows he is the best swimmer in Kentucky, and when he comes to a stream he takes a swig of corn licker and jumps in and swims acrost, boots and all—for he was runnin' in his big cowhides, strikin' sparks of fire from the mountains with every leap he made.

Five times he was shot at by Democrats in the first six miles, and in the seventh mile the shootin' was almost

continual, and three or four times he was hit, but he kep' on. It seems the Democrats had got wind he had been sent for to turn the tide and a passel of 'em was out among the hills with rifles to stop him if they could. But he is in too much of a hurry to bandy words with 'em, and he didn't have his gun along, which he regretted, he says, as he is the best gun fighter in Kentucky and he keeps on a-runnin' and a-swimmin' and a-jumpin' cricks and a-hurdlin' rocks with the bullets whizzin' around him and the lightnin' strikin' in his path, for another big storm had come up, and no power on this here earth could head him off, he says, for it come to him like a Voice from on High he was the preordained messenger and hero who was goin' to turn the tide and save the country from this here free-silver ruination. About two miles from the pollin' place, jist as he jumps into the last big river, two men plunges into the water after him with dirks, and one of them he gets quick, but the other one drags Bud under the water, stabbin' and jabbin' at him. There is a terrible stabbin' and stickin' battle way down under the water, which is runnin' so fast that big stones the size of a cow is being rolled down stream, but Bud he don't mind the stones, and he can swim under water as well as on top of it, he says, and he's the best knife fighter in Kentucky, he says, and he soon fixes that feller and swims to shore with his knife in his teeth, and now he's only got one more mountain to cross.

But a kind of hurricane has sprung up and turned into a cyclone in there among the hills, and as he goes

over the top of that last mountain, lickety-split, in the dark and wind and rain, he blunders into a whole passel of rattlesnakes that has got excited by the elements. But he fit his way through 'em, thankin' God he had nearly a quart of licker left to take for the eight or ten bites he got, and next there rose up in front of him two of them big brown bears, and they was wild with rage because the storm had been slingin' boulders at 'em. One of them bears he sticked with his knife and made short work of, but the other one give him quite a tussel, Bud says, afore he conquered it and straddled it. And it was a lucky thing for him, he says, that he caught that bear in time, for he was gittin' a leetle weak with loss of blood and snake bites and battlin' with the elements. Bud, he is the best rider in Kentucky, and it wasn't thirty seconds afore that bear knowed a master was a-ridin' of it, and in five minutes more Bud, he gallops up to that pollin' place, right through the heart of the hurricane, whippin' that bear with rattlesnakes to make it go faster, and he jumps off and cracks his boot heels together and gives a yell and casts the decidin' vote into the ballot box. He had made it with nearly ten seconds to spare.

Well, accordin' to Bud Peevy that there one vote carries the day for McKinley in that county and not only in that county alone, but in that electorial district, and that electorial district gives McKinley the State of Kentucky, which no Republican had ever carried Kentucky for President for afore. And two or three other States was hangin' back keepin' their polls open late

to see how Kentucky would go, and when it was flashed by telegraph all over the country that Bud Peevy was carryin' Kentucky for McKinley, them other States joined in with Kentucky and cast their electorial votes that-a-way, too, and McKinley was elected President.

So Bud figgers he has jist naturally elected that man President and saved the country—he is the one that was the Decidin' Vote for this whole derned republic. And, as I said, he loves to tell about it. It was in 1896 that Bud saved the country and it was in 1900 that he moved to Brown County, Indianny, and started in with his oratin' about what a great man he was, and givin' his political opinions about this, that and the other thing, like he might 'a' been President himself. Bein' the Decidin' Vote that-a-way made him think he jist about run this country with his ideas.

He's been hangin' around the streets in his new home, the county town of Brown County, for five or six weeks, in the summer of 1900, tellin' what a great feller he is, and bein' admired by everybody, when one day the news comes that the U. S. Census for 1900 has been pretty nigh finished, and that the Centre of Population for the whole country falls in Brown County. Well, you can understand that's calculated to make folks in that county pretty darned proud.

But the proudest of them all was a feller by the name of Ezekiel Humphreys. It seems these here government sharks had it figgered out that the centre of population fell right on to where this here Zeke Humphrey's farm was, four or five miles out of town.

And Zeke, he figgers that he, himself, personal, has become the Centre of Population.

Zeke hadn't never been an ambitious man. He hadn't never gone out and courted any glory like that, nor schemed for it nor thought of it. But he was a feller that thought well enough of himself, too. He had been a steady, hard-workin' kind of man all his life, mindin' his own business and payin' his debts, and when this here glory comes to him, bein' chose out of ninety millions of people, as you might say, to be the one and only Centre of Population, he took it as his just due and was proud of it.

"You see how the office seeks the man, if the man is worthy of it!" says Zeke. And everybody liked Zeke that knowed him, and was glad of his glory.

Well, one day this here Decidin' Vote, Bud Peevy, comes to town to fill himself up on licker and tell how he saved the country, and he is surprised because he don't get nobody to listen to him. And pretty soon he sees the reason for it. There's a crowd of people on Main Street all gathered around Zeke Humphreys and all congratulatin' him on being the Centre of Population. And they was askin' his opinion on politics and things. Zeke is takin' it modest and sensible, but like a man that knowed he deserved it, too. Bud Peevy, he listens for a while, and he sniffs and snorts, but nobody pays any 'tention to him. Finally, he can't keep his mouth shut any longer, and he says:

"Politics! Politics! To hear you talk, a fellow'd think you really got a claim to talk about politics!"

Zeke, he never was any trouble hunter, but he never run away from it, neither.

"Mebby," says Zeke, not het up any, but right serious and determined-like, "mebby you got more claim to talk about politics than I have?"

"I shore have," says Bud Peevy. "I reckon I got more claim to be hearkened to about politics than any other man in this here whole country. I'm the Decidin' Vote of this here country, I am!"

"Well, gosh-ding my melts!" says Zeke Humphreys. "You ain't proud of yourself, nor nothin', are you?"

"No prouder nor what I got a right to be," says Bud Peevy, "considerin' what I done."

"Oh, yes, you be!" says Zeke Humphreys. "You been proudin' yourself around here for weeks now all on account o' that decidin' vote business. And *anybody* might 'a' been a Decidin' Vote. A Decidin' Vote don't amount to nothin' 'longside a Centre of Population."

"Where would your derned population be if I hadn't went and saved this here country for 'em?" asks Bud Peevy.

"Be?" says Zeke. "They'd be right where they be now, if you'd never been born nor heard tell on, that's where they'd be. And I'd be the centre of 'em, jist like I be now!"

"And what *air* you now?" says Bud Peevy, mighty mean and insultin'-like. "You ain't nothin' but a accident, you ain't! What I got, I fit for and I earnt. But you ain't nothin' but a happenin'!"

Them seemed like mighty harsh words to Zeke, for he figgered his glory was due to him on account of the uprighteous life he always led, and so he says:

"Mister, anybody that says I ain't nothin' but a happenin' is a liar."

"I kin lick my weight in rattlesnakes," yells Bud Peevy, "and I've done it afore this! And I tells you once again, and flings it in your face, that you ain't nothin' but a accidental happenin'!"

"You're a liar, then!" says Zeke.

With that Bud Peevy jerks his coat off and spits on to his hands.

"Set yo'self, man," says he; "the whirlwind's comin'!" And he makes a rush at Zeke. Bud is a good deal taller'n Zeke, but Zeke is sort o' bricky-red and chunky like a Dutch Reformed Church, and when this here Peevy comes on to him with a jump Zeke busts him one right on to the eye. It makes an uncheerful noise like I heard one time when Dan Lively, the butcher acrost the street there, hit a steer in the head with a sledge hammer. Bud, he sets down sudden, and looks surprised out of the eye that hadn't went to war yet. But he must 'a' figgered it was a accident for he don't set there long. He jumps up and rushes again.

"I'm a wildcat! I'm a wildcat!" yells this here Bud.

And Zeke, he collisions his fist with the other eye, and Bud sets down the second time. I won't say this here Zeke's hands was as big as a quarter of beef. The fact is, they wasn't that big. But I seen that fight myself, and there was somethin' about the size and shape

of his fist when it was doubled up that kind o' *reminded* me of a quarter of beef. Only his fists was harder than a quarter of beef. I guess Zeke's fists was about as hard as a hickory log that has been gettin' itself soaked and dried and seasoned for two or three years. I heard a story about Zeke and a mule that kicked him one time, but I didn't see it myself and I dunno' as it's all true. The word was that Zeke jist picked up that mule after it kicked him and frowned at it and told it if it ever done that again he would jist naturally pull off the leg that it kicked him with and turn it loose to hop away on three legs, and he cuffed that mule thorough and thoughtful and then he took it by one hind leg and fore leg and jounced it against a stone barn and told it to behave its fool self. It always seemed to me that story had been stretched a mite, but that was one of the stories they telled on Zeke.

But this here Bud Peevy is game. He jumps up again with his two eyes lookin' like a skillet full of tripe and onions and makes another rush at Zeke. And this time he gets his hands on to Zeke and they rastles back and forth. But Bud, while he is a strong fellow, he ain't no ways as strong as a mule even if he is jist as sudden and wicked, so Zeke throws him down two or three times. Bud, he kicks Zeke right vicious and spiteful into the stomach, and when he done that Zeke began to get a little cross. So he throwed Bud down again and this time he set on top of him.

"Now, then," says Zeke, bangin' Bud's head on to the sidewalk, "am I a happenin', or am I on purpose?"

"Lemme up," says Bud. "Leggo my whiskers and lemme up! You ain't licked me any, but them ol' wounds I got savin' this country is goin' to bust open ag'in. I kin feel 'em bustin'."

"I didn't start this," says Zeke, "but I'm a-goin' to finish it. Now, then, am I a accident, or was I meant?"

"It's a accident you ever got me down," says Bud, "Whether you are a accident yourself or not."

Zeke jounces his head on the sidewalk some more and he says: "You answer better nor that! You go further! You tell me whether I'm on purpose or not!"

"You was meant for somethin'," says Bud, "but you can't make me say what! You can bang my head off and I won't say what. Two or three of them bullets went into my neck right where you're bendin' it and I feel them ol' wounds bustin' open."

"I don't believe you got no ol' wounds," says Zeke, "and I don't believe you ever saved no country and I'm gonna keep you here till I've banged some sense and politeness into your head."

Bud, he gives a yell and a twist, and bites Zeke's wrist; Zeke slapped him some, and Bud ketched one of Zeke's fingers into his mouth and nigh bit it off afore Zeke got it loose. Zeke, he was a patient man and right thoughtful and judicious, but he had got kind o' cross when Bud kicked him into the stomach, and now this biting made him a leetle mite crosser. I cal'ated if Bud wasn't careful he'd get Zeke really riled up pretty soon and get his fool self hurt. Zeke, he takes Bud by

the ears and slams his head till I thought the boards in that sidewalk was goin' to be busted.

"Now, then," says Zeke, lettin' up for a minute, "has the Centre of Population got a right to talk politics, or ain't he? You say he is got a right, or I mebby will fergit myself and get kind o' rough with you."

"This here country I saved is a free country," says Bud Peevy, kind o' sick an' feeble, "and any one that lives in this here country I saved has got a right to talk politics, I reckon."

Zeke, he took that for an answer and got good-natured and let Bud up. Bud, he wipes the blood off'n his face and ketches his breath an' gits mean again right away.

"If my constitution hadn't been undermined savin' this here country," says Bud, "you never could 'a' got me down like that! And you ain't heard the end of this argyment yet, neither! I'm a-goin' for my gun, and we'll shoot it out!"

But the townspeople interfered and give Bud to understand he couldn't bring no guns into a fight, like mebby he would 'a' done in them mountain regions he was always talkin' about; an' told him if he was to start gunnin' around they would get up a tar-and-feather party and he would be the reception committee. They was all on Zeke's side and they'd all got kind o' tired listenin' to Bud Peevy, anyhow. Zeke was their own hometown man, and so they backed him. All that glory had come to Brown County and they wasn't goin' to see it belittled by no feller from another place.

Bud Peevy, for two or three weeks, can't understand

his glory has left him, and he goes braggin' around worse than ever. But people only grins and turns away; nobody will hark to him when he talks. When Bud tries to tell his story it gets to be quite the thing to look at him and say: "Lemme up! Leggo my whiskers! Lemme up!"—like he said when Zeke Humphreys had him down. And so it was he come to be a byword around town. Kids would yell at him on the street, to plague him, and he would get mad and chase them kids, and when folks would see him runnin' after the kids they would yell: "Hey! Hey, Bud Peevy! You could go faster if you was to ride a bear!" Or else they would yell: "Whip yourself with a rattlesnake, Bud, and get up some speed!"

His glory had been so big and so widespread for so long that when it finally went, there jist wasn't a darned thing left to him. His heart busted in his bosom. He wouldn't talk about nothin'. He jist slinked around. He was most pitiful because he wasn't used to misfortune like some people.

And he couldn't pack up his goods and move away from that place. For he had come there to live with a married daughter and his son-in-law, and if he left there he would have to get a steady job working at somethin' and support himself. And Bud didn't want to risk that. For that wild run he made the time he saved the country left him strained clean down to the innards of his constitution, he says, and he wa'n't fit to work. But the thing that put the finishing touches on to him was when a single daughter that he had fell into love with

Zeke Humphreys, who was a widower, and married herself to him. His own flesh and blood has disowned him, Bud says. So he turns sad, and he was the saddest man I ever seen. He was sadder than you look to be, stranger.

The stranger with the educated skin breathed a gentle sigh at the conclusion of Hennery's tale of the Deciding Vote and the Centre of Population, and then he said:

"I don't doubt Bud Peevy was a sad man. But there's sadder things than what happened to Bud Peevy. There's things that touches the heart closer."

"Stranger," said Ben Grevis, "you've said it! But Hennery, here, don't know anything about the heart bein' touched."

Hennery McNabb seemed to enjoy the implication, rather than to resent it. Ben Grevis continued:

"A sadder thing than what happened to Bud Peevy is goin' on a good deal nearer home than Indianny.

"I ain't the kind of a feller that goes running to Indianny and to Kentucky and all over the known earth for examples of sadness, nor nothin' else. We got as good a country right here in Illinois as there is on top of the earth and I'm one that always sticks up for home folks and home industries. Hennery, here, ain't got any patriotism. And he ain't got any judgment. He don't know what's in front of him. But right here in our home county, not five miles from where we are, sets a case of sadness that is one of the saddest I ever seen or knowed about.

"Hennery, here, he don't know how sad it is, for he's got no finer feelin's. A free thinker like Hennery can't be expected to have no finer feelin's. And this case is a case of a woman."

"A woman!" sighed the stranger. "If a woman is mixed up with it, it could have finer feelin's and sadness in it!" And a ripple of melancholy ran over him from head to foot.

This here woman (said Ben Grevis) lives over to Hickory Grove, in the woods, and everybody for miles around calls her Widder Watson.

Widder Watson, she has buried four or five husbands, and you can see her any day that it ain't rainin' settin' in the door of her little house, smokin' of her corn-cob pipe, and lookin' at their graves and speculatin' and wonderin'. I talked with her a good deal from time to time durin' the last three or four years, and the things she is speculatin' on is life and death, and them husbands she has buried, and children. But that ain't what makes her so sad. It's wishin' for somethin' that, it seems like, never can be, that is makin' her so sad.

She has got eighteen or twenty children, Widder Watson has, runnin' around them woods. Them woods is jist plumb full of her children. You wouldn't dare for to try to shoot a rabbit anywhere near them woods for fear of hittin' one.

And all them children has got the most beautiful and peculiar names, that Widder Watson got out of these here drug-store almanacs. She's been a great reader

all her life, Widder Watson has, but all her readin' has been done in these here almanacs. You know how many different kinds of almanacs there always are layin' around drug-stores, I guess. Well, every two or three months Widder Watson goes to town and gets a new bale of them almanacs and then she sets and reads 'em. She goes to drug-stores in towns as far as twelve or fifteen miles away to keep herself supplied.

She never cared much for readin' novels and story papers, she tells me. What she wants is somethin' that has got some true information in it, about the way the sun rises, and the tides in the oceans she has never saw, and when the eclipses is going to be, and different kinds of diseases new and old, and receipts for preserves and true stories about how this or that wonderful remedy come to be discovered. Mebby it was discovered by the Injuns in this country, or mebby it was discovered by them there Egyptians in the old country away back in King Pharaoh's time, and mebby she's got some of the same sort of yarbs and plants right there in her own woods. Well, Widder Watson, she likes that kind o' readin', and she knows all about the Seven Wonders of the World, and all the organs and ornaments inside the human carcass, and the kind o' pains they are likely to have and all about what will happen to you if the stars says this or that and how long the Mississippi River is and a lot of them old-time prophecies of signs and marvels what is to come to pass yet. You know about what the readin' is in them almanacs, mebby.

Widder Watson, she has got a natural likin' for fine

words, jist the same as some has got a gift for hand-paintin' or playin' music or recitin' pieces of poetry or anything like that. And so it was quite natural, when her kids come along, she names 'em after the names in her favourite readin' matter. And she gets so she thinks more of the names of them kids than of nearly anything else. I ain't sayin' she thinks more of the names than she does of the kids, but she likes the names right next to the kids. Every time she had a baby she used to sit and think for weeks and weeks, so she tells me, for to get a good name for that baby, and select and select and select out of them almanacs.

Her oldest girl, that everybody calls Zody, is named Zodiac by rights. And then there's Carty, whose real name is Cartilege, and Anthy, whose full name is Anthrax, and so on. There's Peruna and Epidermis and Epidemic and Pisces.

I dunno as I can remember all them swell names. There's Perry, whose real name is Perihelion, and there's Whitsuntide and Tonsillitis and Opodeldoc and a lot more—I never could remember all them kids.

And there ain't goin' to be no more on 'em, for the fact of the matter seems to be that Widder Watson ain't likely to ever get another husband. It's been about four years since Jim Watson, her last one, died, and was buried in there amongst the hickory second-growth and hazel bushes, and since that day there ain't nobody come along that road a-courtin' Widder Watson. And that's what makes her sad. She can't understand it, never havin' been without a husband for so

long before, and she sets and grieves and grieves and smokes her corn-cob pipe and speculates and grieves some more.

Now, don't you get no wrong idea about Widder Watson. She ain't so all-fired crazy about men. It ain't that. That ain't what makes her grieve. She is sad because she wants another baby to pin a name to.

For she has got the most lovely name out of a new almanac for that there kid that will likely never be born, and she sets there day after day, and far into the night, lookin' at them graves in the brush, and talkin' to the clouds and stars, and sayin' that name over and over to herself, and sighin' and weepin' because that lovely name will be lost and unknown and wasted forevermore, with no kid to tack it on to.

And she hopes and yearns and grieves for another man to marry her and wonders why none of 'em never does. Well, I can see why they don't. The truth is, Widder Watson don't fix herself up much any more. She goes barefooted most of the time in warm weather, and since she got so sad-like she don't comb her hair much. And them corn-cob pipes of hern ain't none too savory. But I 'spose she thinks of herself as bein' jist the same way she was the last time she took the trouble to look into the lookin' glass and she can't understand it.

"Damn the men, Ben," she says to me, the last time I was by there, "what's the matter with 'em all? Ain't they got no sense any more? I never had no trouble ketchin' a man before this! But here I been settin'

for three or four years, with eighty acres of good land acrost the road there, and a whole passel o' young uns to work it, and no man comes to court me. There was a feller along here two-three months ago I did have some hopes on. He come a-palaverin' and a-blarneyin' along, and he stayed to dinner and I made him some apple dumplin's, and he et an' et and palavered.

"But it turned out he was really makin' up to that gal, Zody, of mine. It made me so darned mad, Ben, I runned him off the place with Jeff Parker's shotgun that is hangin' in there, and then I took a hickory sprout to that there Zody and tanned her good, for encouragin' of him. You remember Jeff Parker, Ben? He was my second. You wasn't thinkin' of gettin' married ag'in yourself, was you, Ben?"

I told her I wasn't. That there eighty acres is good land, and they ain't no mortgages on it, nor nothin', but the thought of bein' added to that collection in amongst the hazel brush and hickory sprouts is enough for to hold a man back. And the Widder Watson, she don't seem to realize she orter fix herself up a little mite. But I'm sorry for her, jist the same. There she sets and mourns, sayin' that name over and over to herself, and a-grievin' and a-hopin', and all the time she knows it ain't much use to hope. And a sadder sight than you will see over there to Hickory Grove ain't to be found in the whole of the State of Illinois.

"That is a mighty sad picture you have drawed," said the stranger, when Ben Grevis had finished, "but

I'm a sadder man for a man than that there woman is for a woman."

He wrinkled all over, he almost grinned, if one could think of him as grinning, when he mentioned "that there woman." It was as if he tasted some ulterior jest, and found it bitter, in connection with "that there woman." After a pause, in which he sighed several times, he remarked in his tired and gentle voice:

"There's two kinds of sadness, gentlemen. There is the melancholy sadness that has been with you for so long that you have got used to it and kind o' enjoy it in a way. And then there's the kind o' sadness where you go back on yourself, where you make your own mistakes and fall below your own standards, and that is a mighty bitter kind of sadness."

He paused again, while the skin wreathed itself into funeral wreaths about his face, and then he said, impressively:

"Both of them kinds of sadness I have known. First I knowed the melancholy kind, and now I know the bitter kind."

The first sadness that I had lasted for years (said the stranger with the strange skin). It was of the melancholy kind, tender and sort o' sweet, and if I had been the right kind of a man I would 'a' stuck to it and kept it. But I went back on it. I turned my face away from it. And in going back on it I went back on all them old, sad, sweet memories, like the songs tell about, that was my better self. And that is what

caused the sadness I am in the midst of now. It's the feelin' that I done wrong in turnin' away from all them memories that makes me as sad as you see me to-day. I will first tell you how the first sadness come on to me, and secondly I will tell you how I got the sadness I am in the midst of now.

Gentlemen, mebby you have noticed that my skin is kind o' different from most people's skin. That is a gift, and there was a time when I made money off'n that gift. And I got another gift. I'm longer and slimmer than most persons is. And besides them two gifts, I got a third gift. I can eat glass, gentlemen, and it don't hurt me none. I can eat glass as natural and easy as a chicken eats gravel. And them three gifts is my art.

I was an artist in a side-show for years, gentlemen, and connected with one of the biggest circuses in the world. I could have my choice of three jobs with any show I was with, and there ain't many could say that. I could be billed as the India Rubber Man, on account of my skin, or I could be billed as the Living Skeleton, on account of my framework, or I could be billed as the Glass Eater. And once or twice I was billed as all three.

But mostly I didn't bother much with eating glass or being a Living Skeleton. Mostly I stuck to being an India Rubber Man. It always seemed to me there was more art in that, more chance to show talent and genius. The gift that was given to me by Providence I developed and trained till I could do about as much with my skin as most people can with their fingers. It takes

constant work and practice to develop a skin, even when Nature has been kind to you like she has to me.

For years I went along contented enough, seein' the country and being admired by young and old, and wondered at and praised for my gift and the way I had turned it into an art, and never thinkin' much of women nor matrimony nor nothing of that kind.

But when a man's downfall is put off, it is harder when it comes. When I fell in love I fell good and hard. I fell into love with a pair of Siamese twins. These here girls was tied together somewheres about the waist line with a ligament of some kind, and there wasn't no fake about it—they really was tied. On account of motives of delicacy I never asked 'em much about that there ligament. The first pair of twins like that who was ever on exhibition was from Siam, so after that they called all twins of that kind Siamese twins. But these girls wasn't from none of them outlandish parts; they was good American girls, born right over in Ohio, and their names was Jones. Hetty Jones and Netty Jones was their names.

Hetty, she was the right-hand twin, and Netty was the left-hand twin. And you never seen such lookers before in your life, double nor single. They was exactly alike and they thought alike and they talked alike. Sometimes when I used to set and talk to 'em I felt sure they was just one woman. If I could 'a' looked at 'em through one of these here stereoscopes they would 'a' come together and been one woman. I never had any idea about 'em bein' two women.

Well, I courted 'em, and they was mighty nice to me, both of 'em. I used to give 'em candy and flowers and little presents and I would set and admire 'em by the hour. I kept gettin' more and more into love with them. And I seen they was gettin' to like me, too.

So one day I outs with it.

"Will you marry me?" says I.

"Yes," says Hetty. And, "Yes," says Netty. Both in the same breath! And then each one looked at the other one, and they both looked at me, and they says, both together:

"Which one of us did you ask?"

"Why," says I, kind o' flustered, "there ain't but one of you, is they? I look on you as practically one woman."

"The idea!" says Netty.

"You orter be ashamed of yourself," says Hetty.

"You didn't think," says Netty, "that you could marry both of us, did you?"

Well, all I had really thought up to that time was that I was in love with 'em, and just as much in love with one as with the other, and I popped the question right out of my heart and sentiments without thinking much one way or the other. But now I seen there was going to be a difficulty.

"Well," I says, "if you want to consider yourself as two people, I suppose it would be marryin' both of you. But I always thought of you as two hearts that beat as one. And I don't see no reason why I shouldn't marry the two of you, if you want to hold out stubborn that you *are* two."

"For my part," says Hetty, "I think you are insulting."

"You must choose between us," says Netty.

"I would never," says Hetty, "consent to any Mormonous goings-on of that sort."

They still insisted they was two people till finally I kind o' got to see their side of the argyment. But how was I going to choose between them when no matter which one I chooses she was tied tight to the other one?

We agreed to talk it over with the Fat Lady in that show, who had a good deal of experience in concerns of the heart and she had been married four or five times and was now a widder, having accidental killed her last husband by rolling over on him in her sleep. She says to me:

"How happy you could be with either, Skinny, were t'other dear charmer away!"

"This ain't no jokin' matter, Dolly," I tells her. "We come for serious advice."

"Skinny, you old fool," she says, "there's an easy way out of this difficulty. All you got to do is get a surgeon to cut that ligament and then take your choice."

"But I ain't really got any choice," I says, "for I loves 'em both and I loves 'em equal. And I don't believe in tamperin' with Nature."

"It ain't legal for you to marry both of 'em," says the Fat Lady.

"It ain't moral for me to cut 'em asunder," I says.

I had a feelin' all along that if they was cut asunder

trouble of some kind would follow. But both Hetty and Netty was strong for it. They refused to see me or have anything to do with me, they sent me word, till I give up what they called the insultin' idea of marryin' both of 'em. They set and quarrelled with each other all the time, the Fat Lady told me, because they was jealous of each other. Bein' where they couldn't get away from each other even for a minute, that jealousy must have et into them something unusual. And finally, I knuckled under. I let myself be overrulled. I seen I would lose both of 'em unless I made a choice. So I sent 'em word by the Fat Lady that I would choose. But I knowed deep in my heart all the time that no good would come of it. You can't go against Scripter and prosper; and the Scripter says: "What God has joined together, let no man put asunder."

Well, we fixed it up this way: I was to pay for that there operation, having money saved up for to do it with, and then I was to make my choice by chance. The Fat Lady says to toss a penny or something.

But I always been a kind of a romantic feller, and I says to myself I will make that choice in some kind of a romantic way. So first I tried one of these ouija boards, but all I get is "Etty, Etty, Etty," over and over again, and whether the ouija left off an H or an N there's no way of telling. The Fat Lady, she says: "Why don't you count 'em out, like kids do, to find out who is It?"

"How do you mean?" I asks her.

"Why," says she, "by saying, 'Eeny meeny, miney,

mo!' or else 'Monkey, monkey, bottle of beer, how many monkeys have we here?' or something like that."

But that ain't romantic enough to suit me and I remember how you pluck a daisy and say: "She loves me! She loves me not!" And I think I will get an American beauty rose and do it that way. Well, they had the operation, and it was a success. And about a week later I'm to go to the hospital and tell 'em which one has been elected to the holy bonds of matrimony. I gets me a rose, one of the most expensive that money can buy in the town we was in, and when I arrive at the hospital I start up the front steps pluckin' the leaves off and sayin' to myself: "Hetty she is! Netty she is! Hetty she is!"—and so on. But I never got that rose all plucked.

I knowed all along that it was wrong to put asunder what God had joined together, and I orter stuck to the hunch I had. You can't do anything to a freak without changing his or her disposition some way. You take a freak that was born that way and go to operating on him, and if he is good-natured he'll turn out a grouch, or if he was a grouch he'll turn out good-natured. I knowed a dog-faced boy one time who was the sunniest critter you ever seen. But his folks got hold of a lot of money and took him out of the business and had his features all slicked up and made over, and what he gained in looks he lost in temper and disposition. Any tinkering you do around artists of that class will change their sentiments every time.

I never got that rose all plucked. At the top of the

steps I was met by Hetty and Netty, just comin' out of the hospital and not expectin' to see me. With one of them was a young doctor that worked in the hospital and with the other was a patient that had just got well. They explained to me that as soon as they had that operation their sentiments toward me changed. Before, they had both loved me. Afterwards, neither one of 'em did. They was right sorry about it, they said, but they had married these here fellows that morning in the hospital, with a double wedding, and was now starting off on their wedding trips, and their husbands would pay back the operation money as soon as they had earned it and saved it up.

Well, I was so flabbergasted that my skin stiffened up on me, and it stayed stiff for the rest of that day. I never said a word, but I turned away from there a sad man with a broken heart in my bosom. And I quit bein' an artist. I didn't have the sperrit to be in a show any more.

And through all the years since then I been a saddened man. But as time went by there come a kind of sweetness into that sadness, too. It is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all, like the poet says. I was one of the saddest men in the world, but I sort o' enjoyed it, after a few years. And all them memories sort o' kept me a better man.

I orter stuck to that kind of sweet sadness. I orter knowed that if I went back on all them beautiful memories of them girls something bitter would come to me.

But I didn't, gentlemen. I went back on all that

sentiment and that tenderness. I betrayed all them beautiful memories. Five days ago, I went and married. Yes, sir, I abandoned all that sweet recollection. And I been livin' in hell ever since. I been reproachin' myself day and night for not provin' true and trustworthy to all that romantic sadness I had all them years. It was a sweet sadness, and I wasn't faithful to it. And so long as I live now I will have this here bitter sadness.

The stranger got up and sighed and stretched himself. He took a fresh chew of tobacco, and began to crank his flivver.

"Well," said Ben Grevis, "that is a sad story. But I don't know as you're sadder, at that, than the Widder Watson is."

The stranger spat colourfully into the road, and again the faint semblance of a smile, a bitter smile, wreathed itself about his mouth.

"Yes, I be!" he said, "I be a sadder person than the Widder Watson. It was her I married!"

DOGS AND BOYS

(As told by the dog)

If you are a dog of any sense, you will pick you out a pretty good sort of a boy and stick to him. These dogs that are always adopting one boy after another get a bad name among the humans in the end. And you'd better keep in with the humans, especially the grown-up ones. Getting your scraps off a plate at the back door two or three times a day beats hunting rabbits and ground-squirrels for a living.

What a dog wants is a boy anywhere from about nine to about sixteen years old. A boy under nine hasn't enough sense, as a rule, to be any company for an intelligent dog. And along about sixteen they begin to dress up and try to run with the girls, and carry on in a way to make a dog tired. There are exceptions of course—one of the worst mistakes some dogs make is to suppose that all boys are alike. That isn't true; you'll find just as much individuality among boys as there is among us dogs, if you're patient enough to look for it and have a knack for making friends with animals. But you must remember to be kind to a boy if you're going to teach him anything; and you must be careful not to frighten him.

At the same time, you must keep a boy in his place at once. My boy—Freckles Watson is his name—understands just how far he can go with me. But some dogs have to give their boys a lesson now and then. Jack Thompson, who is a fine, big, good-natured dog, has a boy like that. The boy's name is Squint—Squint Thompson, he is—and he gets a little overbearing at times. I remember one Saturday afternoon last summer in particular. There were a lot of us dogs and boys fooling around up at Clayton's swimming-hole, including some stray boys with no dogs to look after them,when Squint began to show off by throwing sticks into the water and making Jack swim in and get 'em. Jack didn't mind that, but after a while he got pretty tired and flopped down on the grass, and wouldn't budge.

"Grab him by the tail and the scruff of the neck, and pitch him in, Squint," says my boy, Freckles. "It's a lot of fun to duck a dog."

Squint went over to where Jack was lying and took hold of the scruff of Jack's neck. Jack winked at me in his good-natured way, and made a show of pulling back some, but finally let Squint pitch him into the deepest part of the swimming-hole. His head went clear under—which is a thing no dog likes, let alone being picked up that way and tossed about. Every boy there set up a shout, and when Jack scrambled up the bank, wagging his tail and shaking the water off himself, the humans all yelled, "Sling him in again, Squint!"

Jack trotted over to where he had a bone planted at

the foot of a walnut tree, and began to dig for it. Squint followed, intending to sling him in again. I wondered if old Jack would stand for any more of it. Jack didn't; but before he got that fool boy to give up his idea he had to pretend like he was actually trying to bite him. He threw a good scare into the whole bunch of them, and then made out like he'd seen a rabbit off through the trees, and took after it. Mutt Mulligan and I went with him, and all the boys followed, naked, and whooping like Indians, except two that stayed behind to tie knots in shirts. When we three dogs had given the whole bunch of them the slip, we lay down in the grass and talked.

"Some day," says Jack to me, "I'm afraid I'm really going to have to bite that Squint boy, Spot."

"Don't do it," says I, "he's just a fool boy, and he doesn't really mean anything by it."

"The thing to do," says Mutt Mulligan, "is to fire him—just turn him loose without a dog to his name, and pick up another boy somewhere."

"But I don't like to give Squint up," says Jack, very thoughtful. "I think it's my duty to stick to him, even if I have to bite him once or twice to keep him in his place."

"You see," Jack went on, "I'm really *fond* of Squint. I've had him three years now, and I'm making a regular boy of him. He was a kind of a sissy when I took charge of him. His folks made him wear long yaller curls, and they kept him in shoes and stockings even in the summer-time, and they dressed him up in little blouses,

and, say, fellows, you'd never guess what they called him!"

"What?" says I.

"Percival," says Jack. "And they wouldn't let him fight. Well, I've seen him turn into a real boy, a bit at a time, and I think it's up to me to stick to the job and help with his education. He chews tobacco now," says Jack very proudly, "and he can smoke a corncob pipe without getting sick; and I'll tell you what, Spot, he can lick that Freckles boy of yours to a frazzle."

"Huh!" says I, "there's no boy of his age in town that dast to knock a chip off that Freckles boy's shoulder."

"Yes, sir," says Jack, ignoring my remark, "that Squint has turned into some kid, believe me! And the first time I saw him he was a sight. It was about dusk, one summer afternoon three years ago, and he was sitting down in the grass by the side of the road six or seven miles from town, crying and talking to himself. I sat down a little way off and listened. He had run away from home, and I didn't blame him any, either. Besides the curls and shoes and stockings I have mentioned, there were other persecutions. He never went fishing, for instance, unless his father took him. He didn't dast to play marbles for keeps. They wouldn't let him have a Flobert rifle, nor even a nigger shooter. There were certain kids he wasn't allowed to play with —they were too common and dirty for him, his folks said. So he had run off to go with a circus. He had

hacked off his Fauntleroy curls before he started only he hadn't got 'em very even; but he had forgot to inquire which way to go to find a circus. He'd walked and walked, and the nearest thing to a circus he had found was a gipsy outfit, and he had got scared of an old man with brass rings in his ears, and run, and run, and run. He'd slung his shoes and stockings away when he started because he hated 'em so, and now he had a stone bruise, and he was lost besides. And it was getting dark.

"Well, I felt sorry for that boy. I sat there and watched him, and the idea came to me that it would be a Christian act to adopt him. He wasn't a sissy at heart—he had good stuff in him, or he wouldn't have run away. Besides, I wanted a change; I'd been working for a farmer, and I was pretty sick of that."

"It's no life for a dog with any sporting instinct," I said, "farm life isn't. I've tried it. They keep you so infernally busy with their cows and sheep and things; and I knew one farm dog that had to churn twice a week. They stuck him in a treadmill and made him."

"A farm's no worse than living in a city," said Mutt Mulligan. "A city dog ain't a real dog; he's either an outcast under suspicion of the police, or a mama's pet with ribbons tied around his neck."

"You can't tell me," says Jack. "I know. A country town with plenty of boys in it, and a creek or river near by, is the only place for a dog. Well, as I was saying, I felt sorry for Percival, and we made friends.

Pretty soon a man that knew him came by in a buggy, going to town. He was a doctor, and he stopped and asked Percival if he wasn't pretty far from home. Percival told him he'd left home for good and for all; but he sniffled when he said it, and the doctor put him into his buggy and drove him to town. I drilled along behind. It had been dark quite a while when we got home, and Percival's folks were scared half to death. His mother had some extra hysterics when she saw his hair.

" 'Where on earth did you get that ornery-looking yellow mongrel?' says Percival's father when he caught sight of me.

" 'That's my dog,' says Percival. 'I'm going to keep him.'

" 'I won't have him around,' says his mother.

"But Percival spunked up and said he'd keep me, and he'd get his hair shingled tight to his head, or else the *next* time he ran away he'd make a go of it. He got a licking for that remark, but they were so glad to get him back they let him keep me. And from that time on Percival began to get some independence about him. He ain't Percival now; he's Squint."

It's true that a dog can help a lot in a boy's education. And I'm proud of what I've done for Freckles. I will always remember one awful time I had with him, though. I didn't think he'd ever pull through it. All of a sudden he got melancholy—out of sorts and dreamy. I couldn't figure out what was the matter with him at first. But I watched him close, and finally I found

out he was in love. He was feeling the disgrace of being in love pretty hard, too; but he was trying not to show it. The worst part of it was, he was in love with his school-teacher. She was a Miss Jones, and an old woman—twenty-two or twenty-three years old, she was.

Squint and Freckles had a fight over it when Squint found out. Squint came over to our place one night after supper and whistled Freckles out. He says:

"Say, Freckles, I seen you put an apple on Miss Jones's desk this morning."

"You're a liar," says Freckles, "and you dastn't back it."

"I dast," says Squint.

"Dastn't," says Freckles.

"Dast," says Squint.

"Back it then," says Freckles.

"Well, then, you're another," says Squint. Which backed it.

Then Freckles, he put a piece of wood on to his shoulder, and said:

"You don't dast to knock that chip off."

"I dast," says Squint.

"You dastn't," says Freckles.

Squint made a little push at it. Freckles dodged, and it fell off. "There," says Squint, "I knocked it off."

"You didn't; it fell off."

"Did."

"Didn't neither."

"Did teether. Just put it on again, and see if I don't dast to knock it off."

"I don't have to put it on again, and you ain't big enough to make me do it," says Freckles.

"I can too make you."

"Can't."

"Huh, you can't run any sandy over me!"

"I'll show you whether I can or not!"

"Come on, then, over back of the Baptist Church, and show me."

"No, I won't fight in a graveyard."

"Yah! Yah! Yah!—'fraid of a graveyard at night! Fraid-cat! Fraid-cat! Fraid-cat!"

There isn't any kid will stand for that, so they went over to the graveyard back of the Baptist Church. It was getting pretty dark, too. I followed them, and sat down on a grave beside a tombstone to watch the fight. I guess they were pretty much scared of that graveyard, both of those boys; but us dogs had dug around there too much, making holes after gophers, and moles, and snakes for me to mind it any. They hadn't hit each other more than half a dozen times, those boys, when a flea got hold of me right in the middle of my back, up toward my neck—the place I never can reach, no matter how hard I dig and squirm. It wasn't one of my own fleas, by the way it bit; it must have been a tramp flea that had been starved for weeks. It had maybe come out there with a funeral a long time before and got lost off of someone, and gone without food ever since; and while I was rolling around and

twisting, and trying to get at it, I bumped against that tombstone with my whole weight. It was an old slab, and loose, and it fell right over in the grass with a thud. The boys didn't know I was there, and when the tombstone fell and I jumped, they thought ghosts were after them, though I never heard of a ghost biting anybody yet. It was all I could do to keep up with those boys for the next five minutes, and I can run down a rabbit. When they stopped, they were half a mile away, on the schoolhouse steps, hanging on to each other for comfort. But, after a while they got over their scare, and Squint said:

"There ain't any use in you denying that apple, Freckles; two others, besides me, not counting a girl, saw you put it there."

"Well," said Freckles, "it's nobody's business."

"But what I can't make out," says Squint, "is what became of the red pepper. We knew you wasn't the kind of a softy that would bring apples to teacher unless they was loaded with cayenne pepper, or something like that. So we waited around after school to see what would happen when she bit into it. But she just set at her desk and eat it all up, and slung the core in the stove, and nothing happened."

"That's funny," says Freckles. And he didn't say anything more.

"Freckles," says Squint, "I don't believe you put any red pepper into that apple."

"I did," says Freckles. "You're a liar!"

"Well," says Squint, "what become of it, then?"

"That's none of your business, what become of it," says Freckles. "What's it to you what become of it? How do I know what become of it?"

"Freckles," says Squint, "I believe you're stuck on teacher."

"You're a liar!" yells Freckles. And this time he was so mad he hit Squint without further words. They had a beauty of a fight, but finally Freckles got Squint down on the gravel path, and bumped his head up and down in the gravel.

"Now," says he, "did you see any apple?"

"No," says Squint, "I didn't see any apple."

"If you had seen one, would there have been pepper in it?"

"There would have been—le'me up, Freckles."

"Am I stuck on teacher?"

"You ain't stuck on anybody—ouch, Freckles, le'me up!"

Freckles let him up, and then started back toward home, walking on different sides of the street. About half-way home Freckles crossed the street, and said:

"Squint, if I tell you something, you won't tell?"

"I ain't any snitch, Freckles, and you know it."

"You won't even tell the rest of the Dalton Gang?"

"Nope."

"Cross your heart and hope to die?"

"Sure."

"Well, set down on the grass here, and I'll tell you."

They set down, and Freckles says:

"Honest, Squint, it's true—I did take her that apple

this morning, and I'm stuck on her, and there wasn't any pepper in it."

"Gee, Freckles!" says Squint.

Freckles only drew in a deep breath.

"I'm awful sorry for you, Freckles," says Squint, "honest, I am."

"You always been a good pal, Squint," says Freckles.

"Ain't there anything can be done about it?"

"Nope," says Freckles.

"The Dalton Gang could make things so hot for her she'd have to give up school," says Squint, very hopeful. "If you didn't see her any more, you'd maybe get over it, Freckles."

"No, Squint, I don't want her run out."

"Don't *want* her run out! Say, Freckles, you don't mean to say you *like* being in love with her?"

"Well," says Freckles, "if I did like it, that would be a good deal of disgrace, wouldn't it?"

"Gosh darn her!" says Squint.

"Well, Squint," says Freckles, "if you call me a softy, I'll lick you again; but honest, I do kind of like it."

And after that disgrace there wasn't anything more either of them could say. And that disgrace ate into him more and more; it changed him something awful. It took away all his spirit by degrees. He got to be a different boy—sort of mooned around and looked foolish. And he'd blush and giggle if any one said "Hello" to him. I noticed the first bad sign one Saturday when his father told him he couldn't go swimming until after he had gone over the whole patch and picked the

bugs off of all the potatoes. He didn't kick nor play sick; he didn't run away; he stayed at home and bugged those potatoes; he bugged them very hard and savage; he didn't do two rows, as usual, and then sneak off through the orchard with me—*no, sir, he bugged 'em all!* I lay down at the edge of the patch and watched him, and thought of old times, and the other dogs and boys down at the creek, or maybe drowning out gophers, or getting chased by Cy Smith's bull, or fighting out a bumblebee's nest and putting mud on the stung places, and it all made me fell mighty sad and downcast. Next day was Sunday, and they told him he'd get a licking if he chased off after Sunday-school and played base-ball out to the fair-grounds—and he didn't; he came straight home, without even stopping back of the livery-stable to watch the men pitch horseshoes. And next day was Monday, and he washed his neck without being told, and he was on time at school, and he got his grammar lesson. And worse than that before the day was over, for at recess-time the members of the Dalton Gang smoked a Pittsburgh stogie, turn and turn about, out behind the coal-house. Freckles rightly owned a fifth interest in that stogie, but he gave his turns away without a single puff. Some of us dogs always hung around the school-yard at recess-times, and I saw that myself, and it made me feel right bad; it wasn't natural. And that night he went straight home from school, and he milked the cow and split the kindling wood without making a kick, and he washed his feet before he went to bed without being made to.

No, sir, it wasn't natural. And he felt his disgrace worse and worse, and lost his interest in life more and more as the days went by. One afternoon when I couldn't get him interested in pretending I was going to chew up old Bill Patterson, I knew there wasn't anything would take him out of himself. Bill was the town drunkard, and all of us dogs used to run and bark at him when there were any humans looking on. I never knew how we got started at it, but it was the fashion. We didn't have anything against old Bill either, but we let on like we thought he was a tough character; that is, if any one was looking at us. If we ever met old Bill toward the edge of town, where no one could see us, we were always friendly enough with him, too. Bill liked dogs, and used to be always trying to pet us, and knew just the places where a dog liked to be scratched, but there wasn't a dog in town would be *seen* making up to him. We'd let him think maybe we were going to be friendly, and smell and sniff around him in an encouraging sort of a way, like we thought maybe he was an acquaintance of ours, and then old Bill would get real proud and try to pat our heads, and say: "The *dogs* all know old Bill, all right —yes, sir! *They* know who's got a good heart and who ain't. May be an outcast, but the *dogs* know—yes, sir!" And when he said that we'd growl and back off, and circle around him, and bristle our backs up, and act like we'd finally found the man that robbed our family's chicken-house last week, and run in and snap at Bill's legs. Then all the boys and other humans around

would laugh. I reckon it was kind of mean and hypocritical in us dogs, too; but you've got to keep the humans jollied up, and the coarsest kind of jokes is the only kind they seem to appreciate. But even when I put old Bill through his paces, that Freckles boy didn't cheer up any.

The worst of it was that Miss Jones had made up her mind to marry the Baptist minister, and it was only a question of time before she'd get him. Every dog and human in our town knew that. Folks used to talk it over at every meal, or out on the front porches in the evenings, and wonder how much longer he would hold out. And Freckles used to listen to them talking, and then sneak off alone and sit down with his chin in his hands and study it all out. The Dalton Gang—Squint had told the rest of them, each promising not to tell—was right sympathetic at first. They offered to burn the preacher's house down if that would do any good. But Freckles said no, leave the preacher alone. It wasn't *his* fault—everyone knew *he* wouldn't marry Miss Jones if she let him alone. Then the Daltons said they'd kidnap the teacher if he said the word. But Freckles said no, that would cause a lot of talk; and, besides, a grown woman eats an awful lot; and what would they feed her on? Finally Tom Mulligan—he was Mutt Mulligan's boy—says:

"What you got to do, Freckles, is make some kind of a noble sacrifice. That's the way they always do in these here Lakeside Library books. Something that will touch her heart."

And they all agree her heart has got to be touched. But how?

"Maybe," says Squint, "it would touch her heart if the Dalton Gang was to march in in a body and offer to reform."

But Tom Mulligan says he wouldn't go *that* far for any one. And after about a week the Dalton Gang lost its sympathy and commenced to guy Freckles and poke fun at him. And then there were fights—two or three every day. But gradually it got so that Freckles didn't seem to take any comfort or joy in a fight, and he lost spirits more and more. And pretty soon he began to get easy to lick. He got so awful easy to lick the Daltons got tired of licking him, and quit fighting him entirely. And then the worst happened. One day they served him notice that until he got his nerve back and fell out of love with Miss Jones again, he would not be considered a member of the Dalton Gang. But even that didn't jar him any—Freckles was plumb ruined.

One day I heard the humans talking it over that the preacher had give in at last. Miss Jones's pa, and her uncle too, were both big church members, and he never really had a chance from the first. It was in the paper, the humans said, that they were engaged, and were to be married when school was out. Freckles, he poked away from the porch where the family was sitting when he heard that, and went to the barn and lay down on a pile of hay. I sat outside the barn, and I could hear him in there choking back what he was feeling. It made me feel right sore, too, and when the moon came up I

couldn't keep from howling at it; for here was one of the finest kids you ever saw in there bellering like a girl, and all because of a no-account woman—a grown-up woman, mind you! I went in and lay down on the hay beside him, and licked his face, and nuzzled my head up under his armpit, to show him I'd stand by him anyhow. Pretty soon he went to sleep there, and after a long while his father came out and picked him up and carried him into the house to bed. He never waked up.

The next day I happened by the schoolhouse along about recess-time. The boys were playing prisoner's base, and I'm pretty good at that game myself, so I joined in. When the bell rang, I slipped into Freckles's room behind the scholars, thinking I'd like a look at that Miss Jones myself. Well, she wasn't anything *I'd* go crazy over. When she saw me, there was the deuce to pay.

"Whose dog is that?" she sings out.

"Please, ma'am," squeals a little girl, "that is Harold Watson's dog, Spot."

"Harold Watson," says she to Freckles, "don't you know it's strictly against the rules to bring dogs to school?"

"Yes'm," says Freckles, getting red in the face.

"Then why did you do it?"

"I didn't, ma'am," says he. "He's just come visitin' like."

"Harold," says she, "don't be impudent. Step forward."

He stepped toward her desk, and she put her hand

on his shoulder. He jerked away from her, and she grabbed him by the collar. No dog likes to see a grown-up use his boy rough, so I moved a little nearer and growled at her.

"Answer me," she says, "why did you allow this beast to come into the schoolroom?"

"Spot ain't a beast," says Freckles. "He's my dog."

She stepped to the stove and picked up a poker, and come toward me. I dodged, and ran to the other side of her desk, and all the scholars laughed. That made her mad, and she made a swipe at me with that poker, and she was so sudden that she caught me right in the ribs, and I let out a yelp and ran over behind Freckles.

"You can't hit my dog like that!" yelled Freckles, mad as a hornet. "No teacher that ever lived could lick my dog!" And he burst out crying, and ran out of the room, with me after him.

"I'm done with you," he sings out from the hall. "Marry your old preacher if you want to."

And then we went out into the middle of the road, and he slung stones at the schoolhouse, and yelled names, till the principal came out and chased us away.

But I was glad, because I saw he was cured. A boy that is anything will stick up for his dog, and a dog will stick up for his boy. We went swimming, and then we went back as near the schoolhouse as we dast to. When school let out, Freckles licked the whole Dalton Gang, one at a time, and made each say, before he let him up:

"Freckles Watson was never stuck on anybody; and if he was, he is cured."

They all said it, and then held a meeting; and he was elected president.

And me!—I felt so good I went down-town and picked a fuss with a butcher's dog that wore a spiked collar. I had always felt a little scared of that dog before, but that night I just naturally chewed him to a frazzle.

THE KIDNAPPING OF BILL PATTERSON

"This town," says Squint, quiet, but determined, "has got to be made an example of. It has got to learn that it can't laugh at the Dalton Gang and go unscathed. Freckled Watson of Dead Man's Gulch," says he to me, "speak up! What form shall the punishment take?"

"Blood," says I.

"Two-Gun Tom of Texas," says he to Tom Mulligan, "speak!"

"Death!" says Tom.

"Arizona Pete, speak!"

"Blood and Death," says Pete Wilson, making his voice deep.

"Broncho Bob?"

"Blood, death, and fire!" says Bob Jones.

There was a solemn pause for a minute, and then I says, according to rule and regulation:

"And what says Dead-Shot Squint, the Terror of the Plains?"

He was very serious while one might have counted ten breaths, and then he pulled his jack-knife from his pocket and whet it on the palm of his hand, and tried its point on his thumb, and replied:

"He says death, and seals it with a vow!"

That vow was a mighty solemn thing, and we always felt it so. It wasn't the kind of a thing you would ever let small kids or girls know about. First you all sat down in a circle, with your feet together, and rolled up the sleeve of your left arm. Then the knife was passed around, and each drew blood out of his left arm. Then each one got as much blood out of the next fellow's arm as he could, in his mouth, and all swallowed simultaneous, to show you were going into the thing to the death and no turning back. Next we signed our names in a ring, using blood mixed with gunpowder. But not on paper, mind you. We signed 'em on parchment. First and last, that parchment was a good deal of trouble. If you think skinning a squirrel or a rat to get his hide for parchment is an easy trick, just try it. Let alone catching them being no snap. But Squint, he was Captain, and he was stern on parchment, for it makes an oath more legal, and all the old-time outlaws wouldn't look at anything else. But we got a pretty good supply ahead by saving all the dead cats and things like that we could find, and unless you know likely places to look it would surprise you how many dead cats there are in the world.

We were in the Horse Thieves' Cave, about a mile from town. It had really been used for that, way back before the war. There was a gang pretended to be honest settlers like everybody else. But they used to steal horses and hide them out in there. When they had a dozen or so of them they'd take 'em over to the Mis-

sissippi River, which was about thirty miles west, some night, and raft 'em down stream and sell 'em at Cairo or St. Louis. That went on for years, but along in the fifties, my grandfather said, when *he* was a kid, a couple was hung, and the remainder got across the river and went west. The cave was up on the side of a hill in the woods, and forgotten about except by a few old-timers. The door-beams had rotted and fallen down, and the sand and dirt had slid down over the mouth of it, and vines and bushes grown up. No one would have guessed there was any cave there at all. But the dogs got to digging around there one afternoon when the Dalton Gang was meeting in the woods, and uncovered part of those door beams. We dug some more and opened her up. It took a lot of work to clean her out, but she was as good as new when we got done with her. We never told any one, and the vines and bushes were so thick you could hunt a year and never find the opening. It isn't every bunch of kids get a real Horse Thieves' Cave ready-made like that, right from the hands of Providence, as you might say. Pete Wilson used to brag and say his grand-dad was one of those horse-thieves. It made the rest of us feel kind of meek for a time, because none of us could claim any honour or grandeur like that in our families. But my grand-dad, who has a terrible long memory about the early days, said it wasn't so; so far as he could recollect Pete's grand-dad never had any ambition above shoats and chickens.

Well, I was telling you about that oath. We were

taking it because Squint's father, who was mayor, had run on to one of those parchments (which Squint ought never to have taken away from the cave), and had asked a lot of fool questions about it. Then he threw back his head and laughed at the Dalton Gang. It made our blood boil. Hence, our plans for revenge.

"The time has come," said Squint, "for a bold stroke. Yonder proud city laughs. But he laughs best who laughs last. And ere another sun has set——"

"The last time we took the blood oath," interrupts Bob Jones, "we didn't do anything more important than steal the ice cream from the Methodist lawn sociable."

"There must be no failure," says Squint, not heeding him, and he jabbed the knife into the ground and gritted his teeth. You could see how the memory of being laughed at was rankling through his veins.

"But, Squint," says Tom Mulligan, looking quite a bit worried, "you don't *really* mean to kill any one, do you?"

Squint only says, very haughty: "The blood oath has been sworn. Is there a traitor here?" He was always a great one for holding us to it, Squint was, unless what he called an Honourable Compromise came into sight. And we all got mighty uncomfortable and gloomy trying to think of some Honourable Compromise. It was to me that the great idea came, all of a sudden.

"Squint," I says, "the thing to do is to kidnap some prominent citizen and hold him for ransom."

Squint brightened up and said to wring gold from the coffers of yonder proud city would be even more satisfaction than blood. The next question was: Who will we kidnap?

"I suggest the mayor of yonder town!" says Squint.

"Gee—your dad, Squint?" says Tom Mulligan.

"I offer him as a sacrifice," says Squint, very majestically. No one could do any more, and we all felt Squint's dad had deserved it. But the idea was so big it kind of scared us, too. But while the rest of us were admiring Squint, Bob Jones got jealous and offered *his* father. Then we all offered our fathers, except Tom Mulligan, who didn't have anything better to offer than a pair of spinster aunts. There was a general row over whose father was the most prominent citizen. But finally we decided to bar all relatives and kinsfolk, in order to prevent jealousy, even to the distant cousins. But it isn't a very big town, and it would surprise you how many people are related to each other there. Finally Bill Patterson was voted to be the Honourable Compromise, being known as the town drunkard, and not related to anybody who would own up to it.

It figured out easy enough. All we had to do was to wait until Sunday night, and take Bill out of the lock-up. Every Saturday afternoon regular Si Emery, who was the city marshal, arrested Bill for being drunk on Main Street, and Bill was kept in jail until Monday morning. Si was getting pretty old and feeble and shaky, and of late years the town council never let him have the lock-up key until just an hour or so before it

was time to arrest Bill on Saturdays. Because one time Si had forgot to feed and water a tramp in there for about a week, and the tramp took sick after a while, and he was dead when Si remembered about him, and had to be buried at the town's expense. And several times some tough customers had taken the keys away from Si and broken into the place and played cards and cut up in there scandalous for half the night. So it was thought best Si shouldn't carry the keys, nor the handcuffs which belonged to the town. After he had locked Bill up on Saturday evenings Si would take the keys to the mayor's house, and get them again on Monday morning to let Bill out.

So the next Sunday night when the hired girl wasn't looking, Squint sneaked the keys and the town handcuffs out of the drawer in the kitchen table where the knives and forks were kept. He slipped upstairs to bed, and no one noticed. About ten o'clock he dressed again, and got out the back window, and down the lightning rod; and at the same hour us other Daltons were doing much the same.

We met behind the lockup, and put on the masks we had made. They had hair on the bottoms of them to look like beards sticking out.

"Who's got the dark-lantern?" Squint asks, in a whisper.

"M-m-me," answered Pete Wilson, stuttering. I was so excited myself I was biting my coat-sleeve so my teeth wouldn't chatter. And Bob Jones was clicking the trigger of the cavalry pistol his uncle carried in the

war, and couldn't stop, like a girl can't stop laughing when she gets hysterics. The cylinder was gone and it couldn't be loaded or he would have killed himself, for he turned it up and looked right into the muzzle and kept clicking when Squint asked him what the matter was. Pete shook so he couldn't light the lantern; but Squint, he was that calm and cool he lit her with the third match. He unlocked the door and in we went.

Bill was snoring like all get out, and talking in his sleep. That made us feel braver again. Squint says to handcuff him easy and gentle before he wakes. Well, there wasn't any trouble in that; the trouble was to wake him up afterward. He was so interested in whatever he was dreaming about that the only way we could do it was to tickle his nose with a straw and wait until he sneezed himself awake. Squint clapped the muzzle of the pistol to his forehead, while I flashed the lantern in his eyes and the other three sat on his stomach and grabbed his legs. Squint says:

"William Patterson, one move and you are a dead man!"

But Bill didn't try to move any; he only said:

"Can't an honest working-man take a little nap? You go 'way and leave me be!"

"William Patterson," says Squint, "you are kidnapped!"

"Yer a liar," says Bill. "I ain't. Ye can't prove it on to me. I'm just takin' a little nap."

Then he rouses up a little more and looks at us puzzled, and begins to mumble and talk to himself:

"Here I be," he says, "and here they be! I can see 'em, all right; but they can't fool me! They ain't really nothing here. I seen too many of them tremenses come and go to be fooled that easy."

"Arise, William Patterson, and come with us," says Squint.

"Now, you don't want to get too sassy," says Bill, "or you'll turn into something else the first thing *you* know. You tremenses always does turn into something else."

We had to kick him on the shins to make him get up. When we did that he says to himself: "Shucks, now! A body'd think he was bein' kicked if he didn't know different, wouldn't he?"

He came along peaceable enough, but muttering to himself all the way: "Monkeys and crocodiles and these here striped jackasses with wings on to 'em I've saw many a time, and argified with 'em, too; and talked with elephants no bigger'n a man's fist; and oncet I chased a freight train round and round that calaboose and had it give me sass; but this is the first time a passel o' little old men ever come and trotted me down the pike."

And he kept talking like that all the way to the cave. It was midnight before we took off his handcuffs and shoved him in. When we gave him that shove, he did get sort of spiteful and he says:

"You tremenses think you're mighty smart, but if I was to come out of this sudden, where would *you* be? Blowed up, that's where—like bubbles!"

We padlocked the door we had rigged up over the

mouth of the cave, and by the time it was locked he was asleep; we could hear him snoring when we lit out for town again.

On the calaboose door, and in front of the post-office, and on the bank, we tacked big notices. They were printed rough on wrapping paper and spelled wrong so it would look like some tough customers had done it. They read as follows:

> Bill Patterson has Bin stole 5 hundred $$ ransum must be left on baptis Cherch steps by Monday mid-night or his life pays us forfut like a Theef in the nite he was took from jale who Will Be next!
>
> —the kidNappers.

Next morning we were all up at the cave as early as we could make it. I had a loaf of bread and a pie and part of a boiled ham, and Pete had some canned sardines and bacon he got out of his dad's store, and the others were loaded up with eggs and canned fruit and what they could get hold of easy. You may believe it or not, but when we opened that cave door Bill was still asleep. Squint woke him up and told him:

"Prisoner, it is the intention of the Dalton Gang to treat you with all the honours of war until such time as you are ransomed, or, if not ransomed, executed. So long as you make no effort to escape you need have no fear."

"I ain't afeared," says Bill, looking at that grub like he could hardly believe his eyes. We built a fire and cooked breakfast. There was a hollow stump on the

side of the hill, and we had dug into the bottom of it through the top of the cave. It made a regular chimney for our fireplace. If any one saw the stump smoking outside they would only think some farmer was burning out stumps.

Bill always wore a piece of rope around his waist in place of a belt or suspenders. When he had eaten so much he had to untie the rope he sat back and lighted his pipe, and said to me, right cunning:

"I'll bet you ain't got any idea what state this here is."

"It's Illinois," says I. He looked like he was pleased to hear it.

"So it is," says he. "So it is!" After he had smoked awhile longer he said: "What county in Illinois would you say it was, for choice?"

"Bureau county," I told him. I saw then he hadn't known where he was.

"It ain't possible, is it," he says, "that I ever seen any of you boys on the streets of a little city by the name of Hazelton?"

I told him yes.

"I s'pose they got the same old city marshal there?" says he. I guess he thought maybe he'd been gone for years and years, like Rip Van Winkle. He was having a hard time to get things straightened out in his mind. He stared and stared into the bowl of his pipe, looking at me now and then out of the corners of his eyes as if he wondered whether he could trust me or not; finally he leaned over toward me and whispered in-

to my ear, awfully anxious: "Who would you say I was, for choice, now?"

"Bill Patterson," I told him, and he brightened up considerable and chuckled to himself; and then he said, feeling of himself all over and tying on his rope again:

"Bill Patterson is correct! Been wanderin' around through these here woods for weeks an' weeks, livin' on roots an' yarbs like a wild man of Borneo." Then he asks me very confidential: "How long now, if you was to make a guess, would you judge Bill had been livin' in this here cave?"

But Squint cut in and told him point blank he was kidnapped. It took a long time to get that into Bill's head, but finally he asked: "What for?"

"For ransom," says I.

"And revenge," says Squint.

Bill looked dazed for a minute, and then said if it was all the same to us he'd like to have a talk with a lawyer. But Bob Jones broke in and told him "Unless five hundred dollars is paid over to the gang, you will never see Hazelton again." He looked frightened at that and began to pick at his coat-sleeves, and said he guessed if we didn't mind he'd go and take a little nap now. You never saw such a captive for sleeping up his spare time; he was just naturally cut out to be a prisoner. But we felt kind of sorry and ashamed we had scared him; it was so easy to scare him, and we agreed we'd speak gentle and easy to him after that.

At dinner time we waked Bill up and gave him another meal. And he was ready for it; the sight of

victuals seemed to take any fright he might have had out of his mind. You never saw such an appetite in all your born days; he ate like he had years of lost time to make up for; and maybe he had. He was having such a good time he began to have his doubts whether it would last, for he said, in a worried kind of way, after dinner: "This here thing of being kidnapped, now, ain't a thing you boys is going to try and charge for, is it? 'Cause if it is them there sharp tricks can't be worked on to me; and if you was to sue me for it you sue a pauper."

After dinner Squint and I went to town on a scouting party. We hung around the streets and listened to the talk that was going on just like a couple of spies would that had entered the enemy's camp in war time. Everybody was wondering what had become of Bill, and gassing about the notices; and it made us feel mighty proud to think that fame had come to ones so young as us, even although it came in disguise so that no one but us knew it. But in the midst of that feeling we heard Hy Williams, the city drayman, saying to a crowd of fellows who were in front of the post office waiting for the mail to be distributed:

"The beatingest part of the whole thing is that any one would be fools enough to think that this town or any other town would pay ransom to get back a worthless cuss like Bill Patterson!"

It had never struck us like that before. Instead of being famous like we had thought, here we were actually being laughed at again! Squint, he gritted his teeth,

and I knew all the rankling that he had done inside of him was as nothing to the rankling that he was doing now. So that night we put up some more notices around town, which read as follows:

> n. B.—take notus! we didunt reely Expect money for Old Bill Patterson, we onely done that to show this town Is in Our Power. Take warning and pay Up the next will be a rich one or his child.
>
> —kidnappers.

That really made folks pretty serious, that notice. There was a piece in a Chicago paper about the things that had happened in our town. The piece told a lot of things that never had happened, but when the papers came down from Chicago and they all read it the whole town began to get worse and worse excited. And about that time we began to get scared ourselves. For there was talk of sending off to Chicago and getting a detective. People were frightened about their kids, too. It kept getting harder and harder for us to get out to the cave to guard Bill. Not that he needed much guarding, either; for he was having the time of his life out there, eating and sleeping and not working at anything else. It had been years since he had struck any kind of work that suited him as well as being kidnapped did; if we hadn't been so worried it would have been a pleasure to us to see how happy and contented we were making him; he acted like he had found the real job in life that he had always been looking for, and the only thing that bothered him at all was when he recollected about that ransom and got afraid the town would pay it and end

his snap. But mostly he didn't bother about anything; for his recollection was only by fits and starts; yesterday was just as far off to him as a year ago. The second day he was there he did get a little grouchy because he had been without anything to drink for so long. But that night someone broke into the saloon and stole a lot of quart bottles of whiskey; about a bushel of them, it was said. We didn't suspect it was Bill, right at first, for he was foxy enough to keep it hid from us; and when we did know we didn't dare say anything! That whiskey was the one thing Bill had lacked to make him completely happy. But the theft worked in a way that increased our troubles. For it showed people that the mysterious gang was still hanging around waiting to strike a desperate stroke. And the very next night a store was broken into and some stuff stolen. It wasn't Bill, but I suppose some tramp that was hanging around; but it helped to stir things up worse and worse. So we decided that we had better turn Bill loose. We held a meeting out by the cave, and then Squint told him:

"Prisoner, you are at liberty!"

"What d'ye mean by that?" says Bill. "You ain't goin' back on me, are ye?"

"Yonder town has been punished enough," says Squint. "Go free—we strike your shackles off!"

"But see here," says Bill, "wasn't I kidnapped reg'lar? Ain't I been a model prisoner?"

"But we're through with you, Bill," we told him. "Don't you understand?"

Bill allowed it was a mean trick we were playing on him; he said he had thought we were his friends, and that he'd done his best to give satisfaction in the place, and here we were, firing him, as you might say, without any warning, or giving him any chance to get another job like it, or even telling him where he had failed to make good, and then he snuffled like he was going to cry, and said: "That's a great way to treat an honest workin'-man, that is! An' they call this a free country, too!"

But Squint, while expressing sorrow that we should have raised any false hopes, was firm with him, too. "You take the rest of that whiskey and chase along, now, Bill," he said, "you aren't kidnapped any more."

But Bill flared up at that. "I ain't, ain't I?" he said. "Yer a liar! I was kidnapped fair and square; kidnapped I be, and kidnapped I stay! I'll show you blamed little cheats whether I'm kidnapped or not, I will!"

He took a chew of tobacco and sat down on a log, and studied us, looking us over real sullen and spiteful. "Now, then," he says, finally, "if you young smart alecs think you can treat a free man that-a-way yer dern fools. I got the law on to my side, I have. Do you think I don't know that? Mebby you boys don't know ye could go to jail for kidnappin' an honest workin'-man? Well, ye could, if it was found out on ye. It's a crime, that's what it is, and ye could go to jail for it. You treat Old Bill fair and square and keep friends with him, and he won't tell on you; but the minute I

hear any more talk about bein' set at liberty I'll tell on ye, and to jail you goes. I'm mighty comfortable where I be, and I ain't goin' to be turned out."

We all looked at each other, and then we looked away again, and our hearts sank. For each one read in his neighbour's eyes (as Squint said later) what his doom might well be.

"Kidnapped I be," says Bill again, very rough and decided, "and kidnapped I stay. And what's more, I want chicken for supper to-night. I ain't had no chicken for quite a spell. You can wake me up when supper's ready." And he went into the cave and lay down for a nap.

We were in his power, and he knew it!

We had to steal that chicken, and it went against the grain to do it. It was the first time in its career of crime the Dalton Gang had ever actually stolen anything. Except, of course, watermelons and such truck, which isn't really stealing. And except the ice cream from the Methodist lawn sociable, which was for revenge and as a punishment on the Sunday School, and so not really stealing, either.

Things got worse and worse. For Bill, he kept us on the jump. He got to wanting more and more different things to eat, and was more and more particular about the cooking. He wouldn't lift a hand for himself, not even to fill and light his own pipe. We waited on him hand and foot, all day long. And first he would take a fancy for a mess of squirrels, and then he would want pigeons; and we had to take turns fanning the flies off of him when he wanted to take a nap. Once

he told a story, and we all laughed at it; and that gave him the idea he was a great story teller; and he would tell foolish yarns by the hour and get sulky if we didn't laugh. We got so we would do anything to keep him in a good humour. We had a lot of Indian stories and Old Sleuths out to the cave, and he made us take turns reading to him. That good-for-nothing loafer turned into a regular king, and we were his slaves.

Between sneaking out there to keep him happy and contented and rustling up grub for him, and thinking all the time we would be arrested the next minute, and wanting to confess and not daring to, we all got right nervous. Then there was a man came to town who didn't tell what his business was the first day he was there, and we were right sure he was a detective. He passed right by the cave one day, and we hugged the ground behind the bushes and didn't dare breathe. It turned out afterward he was only looking at some land he was figuring on buying. But that night I dreamed that that man arrested me; and I was being sent to jail when I waked up screaming out something about kidnapping. I heard my Pa say to my Ma, after they had got me quieted down:

"Poor little fellow! He thought he was kidnapped! No wonder he is afraid, the state this whole town is in. If those desperadoes are caught, they'll go to the pen for a good long term: nothing on earth can save 'em from a Bureau county jury."

Then he went back into his room and went to sleep; but I didn't go to sleep. What he had said didn't make

me feel sleepy. I slipped out of bed and prayed enough that night to make up for the times I had forgot it lately; and the next day the rest of the Dalton Gang admitted they had prayed some, too.

But the worst of all was when Bill made friends with the tramp. Squint and I went out to the cave one morning to get Bill's breakfast for him, and as we got near we heard *two* sets of snores. Bill's snore you could tell a long way off, he sort of gargled his snores and they ended up with kind of a choke and an explosion. But the other snore was more of a steady whistling sound. We ran across the fellow sudden, and it like to have frightened us out of a year's growth. He was lying just inside the cave with his hat pulled over his face, but he was snoring with one eye open. It peered out from under the brim of his hat; it was half-hidden, but it was open all right, and it was staring straight at us. It wasn't human; no one with good intentions would lie there like that and snore like he was asleep and watch folks at the same time on the sly. We couldn't even run; we stood there with that regular see-saw snore coming and going, and that awful eye burning into the centres of our souls, as Squint says later, and thought our end had come. But he waked up and opened the other eye, and then we saw the first one was glass and he hadn't meant any harm by it. He was right sorry he'd scared us, he said; but we'd have to get used to that eye, for *he* allowed he was kidnapped, too. It was two days before he quit being our captive and left, and they are among the saddest days I ever spent.

He left because Bill's whiskey was gone; and the afternoon he left, Bill was helpless. When we saw Bill in that fix it gave us an idea how to get rid of him. That night he was still weak and easy to handle. So we slipped the handcuffs on him and took him back and locked him into the calaboose again. Then we put signs and notices around town that read this way:

> Ha Ha Ha
> Did you ever get left! this town joshed me for years but I have got even—the joke is on to you—I wasn't kidnapped a tall—who is the suckers now?
>
> BILL PATTERSON.

And that town was so mad that when they found Bill in the jail again there was talk of handling him pretty rough. But it all turned into josh. Bill, when he woke up in the calaboose, thought he had just had a dream at first, and denied he had ever been absent. Then when he saw they all took him for a deep joker he began to act like he was a joker. And before long he got to thinking he really had played that trick on the town. When they used to ask him how on earth he got into and out of the calaboose without the keys, he would wink very mysterious, and look important, and nod and chuckle to himself and say that was the best part of the joke and he intended to keep it to himself.

But one day when he was almost sober he saw Squint and me on the street and stared at us long and hard like he was trying to recollect something, and scratched his

head and said: "You boys didn't always used to live in this town, did you?"

"Uh-huh," says I.

"That's funny," says Bill, "I could have swore you was boys I once knowed a long ways off from here that time I was on my travels."

BLOOD WILL TELL

(As told by the dog)

I AM a middle-sized dog, with spots on me here and there, and several different colours of hair mixed in even where there aren't any spots, and my ears are frazzled a little on the ends where they have been chewed in fights.

At first glance you might not pick me for an aristocrat. But I am one. I was considerably surprised when I discovered it, as nothing in my inmost feelings up to that time, nor in the treatment which I had received from dogs, humans or boys, had led me to suspect it.

I can well remember the afternoon on which the discovery was made. A lot of us dogs were lying in the grass, up by the swimming hole, just lazying around, and the boys were doing the same. All the boys were naked and comfortable, and no humans were about, the only thing near being a cow or two and some horses, and although large they are scarcely more human than boys. Everybody had got tired of swimming, and it was too hot to drown out gophers or fight bumblebees, and the boys were smoking grapevine cigarettes and talking.

Us dogs was listening to the boys talk. A Stray Boy, which I mean one not claimed or looked out for or owned by any dog, says to Freckles Watson, who is my boy:

"What breed would you call that dog of yours, Freck?"

I pricked up my ears at that. I cannot say that I had ever set great store by breeds up to the time that I found out I was an aristocrat myself, believing, as Bill Patterson, a human and the town drunkard, used to say when intoxicated, that often an honest heart beats beneath the outcast's ragged coat.

"Spot ain't any *one* particular breed," says Freckles. "He's considerably mixed."

"He's a mongrel," says Squint Thompson, who is Jack Thompson's boy.

"He ain't," says Freckles, so huffy that I saw a mongrel must be some sort of a disgrace. "You're a link, link liar, and so's your Aunt Mariar," says Freckles.

I thought there might be a fight then, but it was too hot for any enjoyment in a fight, I guess, for Squint let it pass, only saying, "I ain't got any Aunt Mariar, and you're another."

"A dog," chips in the Stray Boy, "has either got to be a thoroughbred or a mongrel. He's either an aristocrat or else he's a common dog."

"Spot ain't any common dog," says Freckles, sticking up for me. "He can lick any dog in town within five pounds of his weight."

"He's got some spaniel in him," says the Stray Boy.

"His nose is pointed like a hound's nose," says Squint Thompson.

"Well," says Freckles, "neither one of them kind of dogs is a common dog."

"Spot has got some bulldog blood in him, too," says Tom Mulligan, an Irish boy owned by a dog by the name of Mutt Mulligan. "Did you ever notice how Spot will hang on so you can't pry him loose, when he gets into a fight?"

"That proves he is an aristocratic kind of dog," says Freckles.

"There's some bird dog blood in Spot," says the Stray Boy, sizing me up careful.

"He's got some collie in him, too," says Squint Thompson. "His voice sounds just like a collie's when he barks."

"But his tail is more like a coach dog's tail," says Tom Mulligan.

"His hair ain't, though," says the Stray Boy. "Some of his hair is like a setter's."

"His teeth are like a mastiff's," says Mutt Mulligan's boy Tom. And they went on like that; I never knew before there were so many different kinds of thoroughbred dog. Finally Freckles says:

"Yes, he's got all them different kinds of thoroughbred blood in him, and he's got other kinds you ain't mentioned and that you ain't slick enough to see. You may think you're running him down, but what you say just *proves* he ain't a common dog."

I was glad to hear that. It was beginning to look to

me that they had a pretty good case for me being a mongrel.

"How does it prove it?" asked the Stray Boy.

"Well," says Freckles, "you know who the King of Spain is, don't you?"

They said they'd heard of him from time to time.

"Well," says Freckles, "if you were a relation of the King of Spain you'd be a member of the Spanish royal family. You fellows may not know that, but you would. You'd be a swell, a regular high-mucky-muck."

They said they guessed they would.

"Now, then," says Freckles, "if you were a relation to the King of Switzerland, too, you'd be just *twice* as swell, wouldn't you, as if you were only related to one royal family? Plenty of people are related to just *one* royal family."

Tom Mulligan butts in and says that way back, in the early days, his folks was the Kings of Ireland; but no one pays any attention.

"Suppose, then, you're a cousin of the Queen of England into the bargain and your grand-dad was King of Scotland, and the Prince of Wales and the Emperor of France and the Sultan of Russia and the rest of those royalties were relations of yours, wouldn't all that royal blood make you *twenty times* as much of a high-mucky-muck as if you had just *one* measly little old king for a relation?"

The boys had to admit that it would.

"You wouldn't call a fellow with all that royal blood in him a *mongrel,* would you?" says Freckles, "You

bet your sweet life you wouldn't! A fellow like that is darned near on the level with a congressman or a vice-president. Whenever he travels around in the old country they turn out the brass band; and the firemen and the Knights of Pythias and the Modern Woodmen parade, and the mayor makes a speech, and there's a picnic and firecrackers, and he gets blamed near anything he wants. People kow-tow to him, just like they do to a swell left-handed pitcher or a champion prize-fighter. If you went over to the old country and called a fellow like that a mongrel, and it got out on you, you would be sent to jail for it."

Tom Mulligan says yes, that is so; his grand-dad came to this country through getting into some kind of trouble about the King of England, and the King of England ain't anywhere near as swell as the fellow Freckles described, nor near so royal, neither.

"Well, then," says Freckles, "it's the same way with my dog, Spot, here. *Any* dog can be full of just *one* kind of thoroughbred blood. That's nothing! But Spot here has got more different kinds of thoroughbred blood in him than any dog you ever saw. By your own say-so he has. He's got *all* kinds of thoroughbred blood in him. If there's any kind he ain't got, you just name it, will you?"

"He ain't got any Great Dane in him," yells the Stray Boy, hating to knuckle under.

"You're a liar, he has, too," says Freckles.

The Stray Boy backed it, and there was a fight. All us dogs and boys gathered around in a ring to watch

it, and I was more anxious than anybody else. For the way that fight went, it was easy to see, would decide what I was.

Well, Freckles licked that Stray Boy, and rubbed his nose in the mud, and that's how I come to be an aristocrat.

Being an aristocrat may sound easy. And it may look easy to outsiders. And it may really be easy for them that are used to it. But it wasn't easy for *me*. It came on me suddenly, the knowledge that I was one, and without warning. I didn't have any time to practise up being one. One minute I wasn't one, and the next minute I was; and while, of course, I felt important over it, there were spells when I would get kind of discouraged, too, and wish I could go back to being a common dog again. I kept expecting my tastes and habits to change. I watched and waited for them to. But they didn't. No change at all set in on me. But I had to pretend I was changed. Then I would get tired of pretending, and be down-hearted about the whole thing, and say to myself: "There has been a mistake. I am *not* an aristocrat after all."

I might have gone along like that for a long time, partly in joy over my noble birth, and partly in doubt, without ever being certain, if it had not been for a happening which showed, as Freckles said, that blood will tell.

It happened the day Wilson's World's Greatest One Ring Circus and Menagerie came to our town. Freckles and me, and all the other dogs and boys, and a good

many humans, too, followed the street parade around through town and back to the circus lot. Many went in, and the ones that didn't have any money hung around outside a while and explained to each other they were going at night, because a circus is more fun at night anyhow. Freckles didn't have any money, but his dad was going to take him that night, so when the parade was over, him and me went back to his dad's drug store on Main Street, and I crawled under the soda-water counter to take a nap.

Freckles's dad, that everyone calls Doc Watson, is a pretty good fellow for a human, and he doesn't mind you hanging around the store if you don't drag bones in or scratch too many fleas off. So I'm there considerable in right hot weather. Under the soda water counter is the coolest place for a dog in the whole town. There's a zinc tub under there always full of water, where Doc washes the soda-water glasses, and there's always considerable water slopped on to the floor. It's damp and dark there always. Outdoors it may be so hot in the sun that your tongue hangs out of you so far you tangle your feet in it, but in under there you can lie comfortable and snooze, and when you wake up and want a drink there's the tub with the glasses in it. And flies don't bother you because they stay on top of the counter where soda water has been spilled.

Circus day was a hot one, and I must have drowsed off pretty quick after lying down. I don't know how long I slept, but when I waked up it was with a start, for something important was going on outside in Main

Street. I could hear people screaming and swearing and running along the wooden sidewalk, and horses whinnying, and dogs barking, and old Si Emery, the city marshal, was yelling out that he was an officer of the law, and the steam whistle on the flour mill was blowing. And it all seemed to be right in front of our store. I was thinking I'd better go out and see about it, when the screen doors crashed like a runaway horse had come through them, and the next minute a big yellow dog was back of the counter, trying to scrouch down and scrooge under it like he was scared and was hiding. He backed me into the corner without seeing me or knowing I was there, and like to have squashed me.

No dog—and it never struck me that maybe this wasn't a dog—no dog can just calmly sit down on me like that when I'm waking up from a nap, and get away with it, no matter *how* big he is, and in spite of the darkness under there I could see and feel that this was the biggest dog in the world. I had been dreaming I was in a fight, anyhow, when he crowded in there with his hindquarters on top of me, and I bit him on the hind leg.

When I bit him he let out a noise like a thrashing machine starting up. It wasn't a bark. Nothing but the end of the world coming could bark like that. It was a noise more like I heard one time when the boys dared Freckles to lie down between the cattle guards on the railroad track and let a train run over him about a foot above his head, and I laid down there with him

and it nearly deefened both of us. When he let out that noise I says to myself, "Great guns! What kind of a dog have I bit?"

And as he made that noise he jumped, and over went the counter, marble top and all, with a smash, and jam into the show window he went, with his tail swinging, and me right after him, practically on top of him. It wasn't that I exactly intended to chase him, you understand, but I was rattled on account of that awful noise he had let out, and I wanted to get away from there, and I went the same way he did. So when he bulged through the window glass on to the street I bulged right after him, and as he hit the sidewalk I bit him again. The first time I bit him because I was sore, but the second time I bit him because I was so nervous I didn't know what I was doing, hardly. And at the second bite, without even looking behind him, he jumped clean over the hitch rack and a team of horses in front of the store and landed right in the middle of the road with his tail between his legs.

And then I realized for the first time he wasn't a dog at all. He was the circus lion.

Mind you, I'm not saying that I would have bit him at all if I'd a-known at the start he was a lion.

And I ain't saying I *wouldn't* 'a' bit him, either.

But actions speak louder than words, and records are records, and you can't go back on them, and the fact is I *did* bite him. I bit him twice.

And that second bite, when we came bulging through the window together, the whole town saw. It was get-

ting up telephone poles, and looking out of second-story windows, and crawling under sidewalks and into cellars, and trying to hide behind the town pump; but no matter where it was trying to get to, it had one eye on that lion, and it saw me chasing him out of that store. I don't say I would have chased him if he hadn't been just ahead of me, anyhow, and I don't say I wouldn't have chased him, but the facts are I *did* chase him.

The lion was just as scared as the town—and the town was so scared it didn't know the lion was scared at all—and when his trainer got hold of him in the road he was tickled to death to be led back to his cage, and he lay down in the far corner of it, away from the people, and trembled till he shook the wagon it was on.

But if there was any further doubts in any quarter about me being an aristocrat, the way I bit and chased that lion settled 'em forever. That night Freckles and Doc went to the circus, and I marched in along with them. And every kid in town, as they saw Freckles and me marching in, says:

"There goes the dog that licked the lion!"

And Freckles, every time any one congratulated him on being the boy that belonged to that kind of a dog, would say:

"Blood will tell! Spot's an aristocrat, he is."

And him and me and Doc Watson, his dad, stopped in front of the lion's cage that night and took a good long look at him. He was a kind of an old moth-eaten lion, but he was a lion all right, and he looked mighty big in there. He looked so big that all my doubts come

back on me, and I says to myself: "Honest, now, if I'd *a-known* he was a lion, and that *big* a lion, when I bit him, *would* I have bit him or would I not?"

But just then Freckles reached down and patted me on the head and said: "You wasn't afraid of him, was you, old Spot! Yes, sir, blood will tell!"

BEING A PUBLIC CHARACTER

(As told by the dog)

Ever since I bit a circus lion, believing him to be another dog like myself, only larger, I have been what Doc Watson calls a Public Character in our town.

Freckles, my boy, was a kind of a public character, too. He went around bragging about my noble blood and bravery, and all the other boys and dogs in town sort of looked up to him and thought how lucky he was to belong to a dog like me. And he deserved whatever glory he got of it, Freckles did. For, if I do say it myself, there's not a dog in town got a better boy than my boy Freckles, take him all in all. I'll back him against any dog's boy that is anywhere near his size, for fighting, swimming, climbing, foot-racing, or throwing stones farthest and straightest. Or I'll back him against any stray boy, either.

Well, some dogs may be born Public Characters, and like it. And some may be brought up to like it. I've seen dogs in those travelling Uncle Tom's Cabin shows that were so stuck on themselves they wouldn't hardly notice us town dogs. But with me, becoming a Public Character happened all in a flash, and it was sort of hard for me to get used to it. One day I was just a

private kind of a dog, as you might say, eating my meals at the Watson's back door, and pretending to hunt rats when requested, and not scratching off too many fleas in Doc Watson's drug store, and standing out from underfoot when told, and other unremarkable things like that. And the next day I had bit that lion and was a Public Character, and fame came so sudden I scarcely knew how to act.

Even drummers from big places like St. Louis and Chicago would come into the drug store and look at my teeth and toe nails, as if they must be different from other dogs' teeth and toe nails. And people would come tooting up to the store in their little cars, and get out and look me over and say:

"Well, Doc, what'll you take for him?" and Doc would wink, and say:

"He's Harold's dog. You ask Harold."

Which Harold is Freckles's other name. But any boy that calls him Harold outside of the schoolhouse has got a fight on his hands, if that boy is anywhere near Freckles's size. Harry goes, or Hal goes, but Harold is a fighting word with Freckles. Except, of course, with grown people. I heard him say one day to Tom Mulligan, his parents thought Harold was a name, or he guessed they wouldn't have given it to him; but it wasn't a name, it was a handicap.

Freckles would always say, "Spot ain't for sale."

And even Heinie Hassenyager, the butcher, got stuck on me after I got to be a Public Character. Heinie would come two blocks up Main Street with lumps of

Hamburg steak, which is the kind someone has already chewed for you, and give them to me. Steak, mind you, not old gristly scraps. And before I became a Public Character Heinie even grudged me the bones I would drag out of the box under his counter when he wasn't looking.

My daily hope was that I could live up to it all. I had always tried, before I happened to bite that lion, to be a friendly kind of a dog toward boys and humans and dogs, all three. I'd always been expected to do a certain amount of tail-wagging and be friendly. But as soon as I got to be a Public Character, I saw right away I wasn't expected to be *too* friendly any more. So, every now and then, I'd growl a little, for no reason at all. A dog that has bit a lion is naturally expected to have fierce thoughts inside of him; I could see that. And you have got to act the way humans expect you to act, if you want to slide along through the world without too much trouble.

So when Heinie would bring me the ready-chewed steak I'd growl at him a little bit. And then I'd bolt and gobble the steak like I didn't think so derned much of it, after all, and was doing Heinie a big personal favour to eat it. And now and then I'd pretend I wasn't going to eat a piece of it unless it was chewed finer for me, and growl at him about that.

That way of acting made a big hit with Heinie, too. I could see that he was honoured and flattered because I didn't go any further than just a growl. It gave him a chance to say he knew how to manage animals. And

the more I growled, the more steak he brought. Everybody in town fed me. I pretty near ate myself to death for a while there, besides all the meat I buried back of Doc Watson's store to dig up later.

But my natural disposition is to be friendly. I would rather be loved than feared, which is what Bill Patterson, the village drunkard, used to say. When they put him into the calaboose every Saturday afternoon he used to look out between the bars on the back window and talk to the boys and dogs that had gathered round and say that he thanked them one and all for coming to an outcast's dungeon as a testimonial of affection, and he would rather be loved than feared. And my natural feelings are the same. I had to growl and keep dignified and go on being a Public Character, but often I would say to myself that it was losing me all my real friends, too.

The worst of it was that people, after a week or so, began to expect me to pull something else remarkable. Freckles, he got up a circus, and charged pins and marbles, and cents when he found any one that had any, to get into it, and I was the principal part of that circus. I was in a cage, and the sign over me read:

SPOT, THE DOG THAT LICKED A LION
TEN PINS ADMITTION

To feed the lion-eater, one cent or two white chiney marbles extry but bring your own meat.
Pat him once on the head twinty pins, kids under five not allowed to.

For shaking hands with Spot the lion-eater, girls not allowed, gents three white chinies, or one aggie marble.
Lead him two blocks down the street and back, one cent before starting, no marbles or pins taken for leading him.
For sicking him on to cats three cents or one red cornelian marble if you furnish the cat. Five cents to use Watson's cat. Watson's biggest Tom-cat six cents must be paid before sicking. Small kids and girls not allowed to sick him on cats.

Well, we didn't take in any cat-sicking money. And it was just as well. You never can tell what a cat will do. But Freckles put it in because it sounded sort of fierce. I didn't care for being caged and circused that way myself. And it was right at that circus that considerable trouble started.

Seeing me in a cage like that, all famoused-up, with more meat poked through the slats than two dogs could eat, made Mutt Mulligan and some of my old friends jealous.

Mutt, he nosed up by the cage and sniffed. I nosed a piece of meat out of the cage to him. Mutt grabbed it and gobbled it down, but he didn't thank me any. Mutt, he says:

"There's a new dog down town that says he blew in from Chicago. He says he used to be a Blind Man's Dog on a street corner there. He's a pretty wise dog, and he's a right ornery-looking dog, too. He's peeled considerably where he has been bit in fights."

"Well, Mutt," says I, "as far as that goes I'm peeled considerable myself where I've been bit in fights."

"I know you are, Spot," says Mutt. "You don't need to tell me that. I've peeled you some myself from time to time."

"Yes," I says, "you did peel me some, Mutt. And I've peeled you some, too. More'n that, I notice that right leg of yours is a little stiff yet where I got to it about three weeks ago."

"Well, then, Spot," says Mutt, "maybe you want to come down here and see what you can do to my other three legs. I never saw the day I wouldn't give you a free bite at one leg and still be able to lick you on the other three."

"You wouldn't talk that way if I was out of this cage," I says, getting riled.

"What did you ever let yourself be put into that fool cage for?" Mutt says. "You didn't have to. You got such a swell head on you the last week or so that you gotto be licked. You can fool boys and humans all you want to about that accidental old lion, but us dogs got your number, all right. What that Blind Man's Dog from Chicago would do to you would be a plenty!"

"Well, then," I says, "I'll be out of this cage along about supper time. Suppose you bring that Blind Man's Dog around here. And if he ain't got a spiked collar on to him, I'll fight him. I won't fight a spike-collared dog to please anybody."

And I wouldn't, neither, without I had one on myself. If you can't get a dog by the throat or the back of his neck, what's the use of fighting him? You might just

as well try to eat a blacksmith shop as fight one of those spike-collared dogs.

"Hey, there!" Freckles yelled at Tom Mulligan, who is Mutt Mulligan's boy. "You get your fool dog away from the lion-eater's cage!"

Tom, he histed Mutt away. But he says to Freckles, being jealous himself, "Don't be scared, Freck, I won't let my dog hurt yours any. Spot, he's safe. He's in a cage where Mutt can't get to him."

Freckles got riled. He says, "I ain't in any cage, Tom."

Tom, he didn't want to fight very bad. But all the other boys and dogs was looking on. And he'd sort of started it. He didn't figure that he could shut up that easy. And there was some girls there, too.

"If I was to make a pass at you," says Tom, "you'd wish you was in a cage."

Freckles, he didn't want to fight so bad, either. But he was running this circus, and he didn't feel he could afford to pass by what Tom said too easy. So he says:

"Maybe you think you're big enough to put me into a cage."

"If I was to make a pass at you," says Tom, "there wouldn't be enough left of you to put in a cage."

"Well, then," says Freckles, "why don't you make a pass at me?"

"Maybe you figure I don't dast to," says Tom.

"I didn't say you didn't dast to," says Freckles; "any one that says I said you didn't dast to is a link, link, liar, and so's his Aunt Mariar."

Tom, he says, "I ain't got any Aunt Mariar. And you're another and dastn't back it."

Then some of the other kids put chips on to their shoulders. And each dared the other to knock his chip off. And the other kids pushed and jostled them into each other till both chips fell off, and they went at it then. Once they got started they got really mad and each did all he knew how.

And right in the midst of it Mutt run in and bit Freckles on the calf of his leg. Any dog will fight for his boy when his boy is getting the worst of it. But when Mutt did that I give a bulge against the wooden slats on the cage and two of them came off, and I was on top of Mutt. The circus was in the barn, and the hens began to scream and the horses began to stomp, and all the boys yelled, "Sick 'im!" and "Go to it!" and danced around and hollered, and the little girls yelled, and all the other dogs began to bark, and it was a right lively and enjoyable time. But Mrs. Watson, Freckles's mother, and the hired girl ran out from the house and broke the fight up.

Grown women are like that. They don't want to fight themselves, and they don't seem to want any one else to have any fun. You gotto be a hypocrite around a grown woman to get along with her at all. And then she'll feed you and make a lot of fuss over you. But the minute you start anything with real enjoyment in it she's surprised to see you acting that way. Nobody was licked satisfactory in that fight, or licked any one else satisfactory.

Well, that night after supper, along comes that Blind Man's Dog. Never did I see a Blind Man's Dog that was as tight-skinned. I ain't a dog that brags, myself, and I don't say I would have licked that heavy a dog right easy, even if he had been a loose-skinned dog. What I do say is that I had been used to fighting loose-skinned dogs that you can get some sort of a reasonable hold on to while you are working around for position. And running into a tight-skinned dog that way, all of a sudden and all unprepared for it, would make anybody nervous. How are you going to get a purchase on a tight-skinned dog when you've been fighting loose-skinned dogs for so long that your teeth and jaws just naturally set themselves for a loose-skinned dog without thinking of it?

Lots of dogs wouldn't have fought him at all when they realized how they had been fooled about him, and how tight-skinned he was. But I was a Public Character now, and I had to fight him. More than that, I ain't ready to say yet that that dog actually licked me. Freckles he hit him in the ribs with a lump of soft coal, and he got off of me and run away before I got my second wind. There's no telling what I would have done to that Blind Man's Dog, tight-skinned as he was, if he hadn't run away before I got my second wind.

Well, there's some mighty peculiar dogs in this world, let alone boys and humans. The word got around town, in spite of his running away like that before I got my second wind, that that Blind Man's Dog, so called,

had actually licked me! Many pretended to believe it. Every time Freckles and me went down the street someone would say:

"Well, the dog that licked the lion got licked himself, did he?"

And if it was a lady said it, Freckles would spit on the sidewalk through the place where his front teeth are out and pass on politely as if he hadn't heard, and say nothing. And if it was a man that said it Freckles would thumb his nose at him. And if it was a girl that said it he would rub a handful of sand into her hair. And if it was a boy anywhere near his size, there would be a fight. If it was too big a boy, Freckles would sling railroad iron at him,

For a week or so it looked like Freckles and I were fighting all the time. Three or four times a day, and every day. On the way to school, and all through recess-times, and after school, and every time we went on to the street. I got so chewed and he got so busted up that we didn't hardly enjoy life.

No matter how much you may like to fight, some of the time you would like to pick the fights yourself and not have other people picking them off of you. Kids begun to fight Freckles that wouldn't have dast to stand up to him a month before. I was still a Public Character, but I was getting to be the kind you josh about instead of the kind you are proud to feed. I didn't care so awful much for myself, but I hated it for Freckles. For when they got us pretty well hacked, all the boys began to call him Harold again.

And after they had called him Harold for a week he must have begun to think of himself as Harold. For one Saturday afternoon when there wasn't any school, instead of going swimming with the other kids or playing baseball, or anything, he went and played with girls.

He must have been pretty well down-hearted and felt himself pretty much of an outcast, or he wouldn't have done that. I am an honest dog, and the truth must be told, the disgrace along with everything else, and the truth is that he played with girls of his own accord that day—not because he was sent to their house on an errand, not because it was a game got up with boys and girls together, not because it was cousins and he couldn't dodge them, but because he was an outcast. Any boy will play with girls when all the boys and girls are playing together, and some girls are nearly as good as boys; but no boy is going off alone to look up a bunch of girls and play with them without being coaxed unless he has had considerable of a down-fall.

Right next to the side of our yard was the Wilkinses. They had a bigger house and a bigger yard than ours. Freckles was sitting on the top of the fence looking into their orchard when the three Wilkins girls came out to play. There was only two boys in the Wilkins family, and they was twins; but they were only year-old babies and didn't amount to anything. The two oldest Wilkins girls, the taffy-coloured-haired one and the squint-eyed one, each had one of the twins, taking care of it. And the other Wilkins girl, the pretty one, she had one of those big dolls made as big as a baby.

They were rolling those babies and the doll around the grass in a wheelbarrow, and the wheel came off, and that's how Freckles happened to go over.

"Up in the attic," says the taffy-coloured-haired one, when he had fixed up the wheelbarrow, "there's a little old express wagon with one wheel off that would be better'n this wheelbarrow. Maybe you could fix that wheel on, too, Harold."

Freckles, he fell for it. After he got the wagon fixed, they got to playing charades and fool girl games like that. The hired girl was off for the afternoon, and pretty soon Mrs. Wilkins hollered up the stairs that she was going to be gone for an hour, and to take good care of the twins, and then we were alone in the place.

Well, it wasn't much fun for me. They played and they played, and I stuck to Freckles—which his name was called nothing but Harold all that afternoon, and for the first time I said to myself "Harold" seemed to fit. I stuck to him because a dog should stick to his boy, and a boy should stick to his dog, no matter what the disgrace. But after while I got pretty tired and lay down on a rug, and a new kind of flea struck me. After I had chased him down and cracked him with my teeth I went to sleep.

I must have slept pretty sound and pretty long. All of a sudden I waked up with a start, and almost choking, for the place was smoky. I barked and no one answered.

I ran out on to the landing, and the whole house was

full of smoke. The house was on fire, and it looked like I was alone in it. I went down the back stairway, which didn't seem so full of smoke, but the door that let out on to the first-floor landing was locked, and I had to go back up again.

By the time I got back up, the front stairway was a great deal fuller of smoke, and I could see glints of flame winking through it way down below. But it was my only way out of that place. On the top step I stumbled over a gray wool bunch of something or other, and I picked it up in my mouth. Thinks I, "That is Freckles's gray sweater, that he is so stuck on. I might as well take it down to him."

It wasn't so hard for a lively dog to get out of a place like that, I thought. But I got kind of confused and excited, too. And it struck me all of a sudden, by the time I was down to the second floor, that that sweater weighed an awful lot.

I dropped it on the second floor, and ran into one of the front bedrooms and looked out.

By jings! the whole town was in the front yard and in the street.

And in the midst of the crowd was Mrs. Wilkins, carrying on like mad.

"My baby!" she yelled. "Save my baby. Let me loose! I'm going after my baby!"

I stood up on my hind legs, with my head just out of that bedroom window, and the flame and smoke licking up all around me, and barked.

"My doggie! My doggie!" yells Freckles, who was

in the crowd, "I must save my doggie!" And he made a run for the house, but someone grabbed him and slung him back.

And Mrs. Wilkins made a run, but they held her, too. The front of the house was one sheet of flame. Old Pop Wilkins, Mrs. Wilkins's husband, was jumping up and down in front of Mrs. Wilkins yelling, here was her baby. He had a real baby in one arm and that big doll in the other, and was so excited he thought he had both babies. Later I heard what had happened. The kids had thought they were getting out with both twins but one of them had saved the doll and left a twin behind. The squint-eyed girl and the taffy-coloured-haired girl and the pretty girl was howling as loud as their mother. And every now and then some man would make a rush for the front door, but the fire would drive him back. And everyone was yelling advice to everyone else, except one man who was calling on the whole town to get him an axe. The volunteer fire engine was there, but there wasn't any water to squirt through it, and it had been backed up too near the house and had caught fire and was burning up.

Well, I thinks that baby will likely turn up in the crowd somewhere, after all, and I'd better get out of there myself while the getting was good. I ran out of the bedroom, and run into that bunched-up gray bundle again.

I ain't saying that I knew it was the missing twin in a gray shawl when I picked it up the second time. And I ain't saying that I didn't know it. But the fact

is that I did pick it up. I don't make any brag that I would have risked my life to save Freckles's sweater. It may be I was so rattled I just picked it up because I had had it in my mouth before and didn't quite know what I was doing.

But the *record* is something you can't go behind, and the record is that I got out the back way and into the back yard with that bundle swinging from my mouth, and walked round into the front yard and laid that bundle down—*and it was the twin!*

I don't make any claim that I *knew* it was the twin till I got into the front yard, mind you. But you can't prove I *didn't* know it was.

And nobody tried to prove it. The gray bundle let out a squall.

"My baby!" yells Mrs. Wilkins. And she kissed me! I rubbed it off with my paw. And then the taffy-coloured-haired one kissed me. And the first thing I knew the pretty one kissed me. But when I saw the squint-eyed one coming I got behind Freckles and barked.

"Three cheers for Spot!" yelled the whole town. And they give them.

And then I saw what the lay of the land was, so I wagged my tail and barked.

It called for that hero stuff, and I throwed my head up and looked noble—and pulled it.

An hour before Freckles and me had been outcasts. And now we was Public Characters again. We walked down Main Street, and we owned it. And we hadn't

any more than got to Doc Watson's drug store than in rushed Heinie Hassenyager with a lump of Hamburg steak, and with tears in his eyes.

"It's got chicken livers mixed in it, too!" says Heinie.

I ate it. But while I ate it, I growled at him.

WRITTEN IN BLOOD

(As told by the dogs)

NEVER did I suppose that I would be a bloodhound in an "Uncle Tom's Cabin" show. But I have been one, and my constant wish is that it has not made me too proud and haughty. For proud and haughty dogs, sooner or later, all have their downfalls. The dog that was the rightful bloodhound in that show was the proudest and haughtiest dog I ever met, and he had his downfall.

Other proud and haughty dogs I have seen, in my time; and some of them I have licked, and some of them have licked me. For instance, there was the one that used to be a blind man's dog on a street corner in Chicago. He was a tough, loud-barking, red-eyed dog, full of suspiciousness and fleas; and his disposition was so bad that it was even said that if one of his fleas bit an ordinary dog, that ordinary dog would swell up where he was bit as if a hornet had stung him. He was proud of those fleas and proud of being that ornery; but he had his downfall.

Another proud and haughty dog I knew belonged to the dog and pony part of a circus that came to our town once. He sat in a little cart in the street parade, with

a clown's hat and jacket on, and drove a Shetland pony. You couldn't get him into a fight; he would just grin and say he was worth too much money to risk himself in a fight, especially as the money he was worth did not belong to him anyhow, but to the circus that owned him. He said it wouldn't be honest to risk other people's money just because he wanted to fight; but I have never believed that he really wanted to fight. He grinned mostly all the time, a conceited kind of grin, and he would up-end himself and stand on his head for you to admire him, and then flop over and bark and look proud of his own tricks and proud of the money he was worth. But he had his downfall right in the midst of his greatest pride, for a brindle Tom-cat with one eye went after him right in the middle of that street parade, and he left that cart very quickly, and it nearly broke up the parade.

But the proudest and haughtiest of all was the bloodhound that owned that Uncle Tom show—leastways, he acted as if he owned it. It was a show that showed in a tent, like a regular circus, and it stayed in our town three days. It had a street parade, too; and this bloodhound was led along at the head of the street parade with a big heavy muzzle on, and he was loaded down with chains and shackles so he could hardly walk. Besides the fellow that led him, there were two more men that followed along behind him and held on to chains that were fastened to his collar. In front of him marched the Uncle Tom of that show; and every now and then the bloodhound would struggle to get at Uncle

Tom and be pulled back. He was a very dangerous-looking dog, and you thought to yourself what a lot of damage he would probably do if he was ever to bite those chains to pieces and eat up those three men that held him and chew Uncle Tom and then run loose into the world. Every step he took he would toss his head and jangle those chains and growl.

After the parade was over, a lot of us dogs and boys went down to the lot where the show was to be held. We were hanging around the tent where the actors were eating, and that bloodhound dog was there without chains like any other dog, and us dogs got to talking with him.

"You country-town dogs," he says to Mutt Mulligan, who is a friend of mine and some considerable dog himself, "don't want to come fussin' around too close to my cook tent or my show! Us troupers ain't got any too much use for you hick dogs, anyhow."

"Oh, it's *your* show, is it?" says Mutt.

"Whose show did you think it was?" says that bloodhound dog, very haughty.

"I thought from all those chains and things, maybe the show owned you, instead of you owning the show," says Mutt.

"You saw who led that street parade, didn't you?" says the bloodhound dog. "Well, that ought to tell you who the chief actor of this show is. This here show is built up around me. If anything was to happen to me, there couldn't be any show."

Mutt, he gave me a signal with his tail to edge in

a little closer, and I sidled up to where I could grab a front leg unexpected to him, if he made a pass at Mutt. And then Mutt says, sneering so his teeth stuck out and his nose wrinkled:

"Something's goin' to happen to you, if you ain't more polite and peaceable in your talk."

"What's goin' to happen to me?" says that bloodhound dog.

"Don't you let them bristles rise around your neck," says Mutt, "or you'll find out what's goin' to happen to you."

"Whose bristles are they?" says that bloodhound dog.

"It don't make any difference whose bristles they are," says Mutt. "No dog can stick his bristles up into my face like that and get away with it. When I see bristles stand up, I take it personal."

But just then Old Uncle Zeb White, who is coloured, come amoseyin' along, and that Tom-show dog barked out:

"Somebody hold me! Quick! Somebody muzzle me! Somebody better put my chains on to me again! Somebody better tell that coloured man to clear out of here! I've been trained to chase coloured men! What do they mean by letting that coloured man get near my show tent?"

Old Uncle Zeb, he is the quietest and most peaceable person anywhere, amongst dogs, boys, or humans, and the janitor of the Baptist church. He is the only coloured man in our town, and is naturally looked up to

and respected with a good deal of admiration and curiosity on that account, and also because he is two hundred years old. He used to be the bodyservant of General George Washington, he says, until General Washington set him free. And then along comes Abraham Lincoln after a while and sets him free again, he says. And being set free by two prominent men like that, Uncle Zeb figures he is freer than anybody else, and I have heard him tell, time and again, how he can't speak kindly enough of them two white gentlemen.

"Don't anybody sick me on to that coloured man," says this bloodhound dog. "If I was to be sicked on to that coloured man, this whole town couldn't pull me off again! I been trained to it, I tell you!"

Which it was easy enough to see he really didn't want to start anything; it was just his pride and haughtiness working in him. Just then Freckles Watson, who is my boy that I own, and Tom Mulligan, who is Mutt Mulligan's boy, both says: "Sick 'im!" Not that they understood what us dogs was talking about, but they saw me and Mutt sidling around that Tom-show dog, and it looked to them like a fight could be commenced. But the Tom-show dog, when he heard that "Sick 'im!" jumped and caught Uncle Zeb by a leg of his trousers. Then Uncle Zeb's own dog, which his name is Burning Deck after a piece Uncle Zeb heard recited one time, comes a-bulging and a-bouncing through the crowd and grabs that Tom-show dog by the neck.

They rolled over and over, and into the eating tent,

and under the table. The actors jumped up, and the table got tipped over, and the whole meal and the tin dishes they was eating off of and all the actors and the benches and the dogs was wallowing and banging and kicking and barking and shouting on the ground in a mess, and all of us other dogs run in to help Burning Deck lick that bloodhound, and all the boys followed their dogs in to see a square deal, and then that tent come down on top of everything, and believe me it was some enjoyable time. And I found quite a sizeable piece of meat under there in the mix-up, and I thinks to myself I better eat that while I can get it, so I crawled out with it. Outside is sitting Uncle Zeb, watching that fallen-down tent heaving and twisting and squirming, and I heard him say to himself:

"White folks is allers gittin' up some kin' of entuhtainment fo' us cullud people to look at! Us cullud people suah does git treated fine in dese heah Nothe'n towns!"

Pretty soon everybody comes crawling out from under that tent, and they straightens her up, and the boss of the show begins to talk like Uncle Zeb has done the whole thing, and Uncle Zeb just sits on the grass and smiles and scratches his head. And finally the boss of the show says to Uncle Zeb could he hire Burning Deck for the bloodhound's part? Because Burning Deck has just about chewed that proud and haughty dog to pieces, and they've got to have a bloodhound!

"No, suh," says Uncle Zeb. "No, suh! I thank yo' kindly fo' yo' offer, suh, but Burnin' Deck, he ain't

gwine inter no show whah he likely ter be sicked on ter no cullud pusson. Burnin' Deck, he allers been a good Republican, bringed up that-a-way, des de same as me, an' we ain't gwine ter take no paht in any gwines-on agin' de cullud nation."

"But see here," says the boss. "In this show the coloured people get all the best of it. In this show the coloured people go to Heaven!"

Uncle Zeb says he had heard a good deal about that Uncle Tom show in his life, first and last, and because he had heard so much, he went to see it one time. And he says if getting chased by bloodhounds and whipped by whips is giving them the best of it, he hopes he never obtains admission to any show where they get the worst of it. The boss, he says that show is the show that helped make the coloured people free, and Uncle Zeb ought to be proud of Burning Deck acting in it. But Uncle Zeb says he ain't to be fooled; it was General Washington set 'em free first, and Abraham Lincoln set 'em free the second time, and now President Wilson is licking them Germans and setting them free again. And as for him, he says, he will stick to his own white folks that he knows and janitors for and whose clothes fit him, and Burning Deck will do the same. And as far as them Tom-show coloured folks' going to heaven is concerned, he reckons he don't want to be chased there by no bloodhounds; and it ain't likely that a man that has janitored for a Baptist church as faithful as he has would go anywhere else, anyhow. So he takes Burning Deck and goes along home.

"I've got to have a dog," says the boss, watching them get the tent fixed up, and rubbing his head.

"Would Spot do?" says Freckles, which is my boy, Spot being me.

Well, I never expected to be an actor, as I said before. But they struck a bargain, which Freckles was to get free admission to that show, and I was to be painted and dyed up some and be a bloodhound. Which the boss said the regular bloodhound which Burning Deck had eat so much of wasn't really a bloodhound, anyhow, but only a big mongrel with bloodhound notions in his head.

Well, maybe you've seen that show. Which all the bloodhound has to do is to run across the stage chasing that Uncle Tom, and Freckles was to run across with me, so there wasn't much chance to go wrong.

And nothing would have gone wrong if it hadn't been for Burning Deck. Uncle Zeb White must have got over his grouch against that show, for there he was sitting in the front row with a new red handkerchief around his throat and his plug hat on his knees, and Burning Deck was there with him. I never had anything but liking for Uncle Zeb, for he knows where to scratch dogs. But Burning Deck and me have never been close friends, on account of him being jealous when Uncle Zeb scratches you too long. He even is jealous when Uncle Zeb scratches a pig, which all the pigs in town that can get loose have a habit of coming to Uncle Zeb's cottage to be scratched, and they say around town that some of those pigs never find their

way home again. Squeals have been heard coming from Uncle Zeb's kitchen, but the rest of the pigs never seem to learn.

But no self-respecting dog would be jealous if his boss scratched a pig. For after all, what is a pig? It is just a pig, and that is all you can say for it. A pig is not a person; a pig is something to eat. But Burning Deck is a peculiar dog, and he gets ideas into his head. And so, right in the midst of the show, when I chased that coloured man across the stage, Burning Deck all of a sudden jumped up on to the platform and grabbed me. I would have licked him then and there, but what was left of the show's bloodhound come crawling out on to the stage dragging two of his legs, and Burning Deck turned from me to him, and then all the actors run on to the stage to save what was left of the bloodhound, and Si Emery, the city marshal, threw open his coat so you could see his big star and climbed on to the stage and arrested everybody, and somebody dropped the curtain down right into the midst of it.

And the way it happened, on the outside of the curtain was left Freckles and me and the Little Eva of that show, which she is beautiful, with long yellow hair and pink cheeks and white clothes like an angel. And before Freckles could stop her, she took hold of him by the hand and says to the audience won't they please be kind to the poor travelling troupers and not let them be under arrest, and let the show go on? And she cried considerable, and all through her crying you could hear Si Emery behind the curtain arresting people; and

after while some of the women in the audience got to crying, too, and the city fathers was all in the audience, and they went up on to the stage and told Si, for the sake of Little Eva, to release everyone he had arrested, and after that the show went on.

Well, after the show was out, quite a lot of the dogs and boys that was friends of mine and of Freckles was waiting for us. Being in a show like that made us heroes. But some of them were considerably jealous of us, too, and there would have been some fights, but Freckles says kind of dignified that he does not care to fight until his show is out of town, but after that he will take on any and all who dare—that is, he says, if he doesn't decide to go with that show, which the show is crazy to have him do. And me and him and Stevie Stevenson, which is his particular chum, goes off and sets down on the schoolhouse steps, and Stevie tells him what a good actor he was, running across the stage with me after that Uncle Tom. But Freckles, he is sad and solemn, and he only fetches a sigh.

"What's eatin' you, Freckles?" Stevie asks him. Freckles, he sighs a couple of times more, and then he says:

"Stevie, I'm in love."

"Gosh, Freckles," says Stevie. "Honest?"

"Honest Injun," says Freckles.

"Do you know who with?" says Stevie.

"Uh-huh!" says Freckles. "If you didn't know who with, how would you know you was?"

But Stevie, he says you might be and not know who

with, easy enough. Once, he says, he was like that. He says he was feeling kind of queer for a couple of weeks last spring, and they dosed him and dosed him, with sassafras and worm-medicine and roots and herbs, and none of it did any good. His mother says it is growing-pains, and his father says it is either laziness and not wanting to hoe in the garden or else it is a tapeworm. And he thinks himself maybe it is because he is learning to chew and smoke tobacco on the sly and keeps swallowing a good deal of it right along. But one day he hears his older sister and another big girl talking when they don't know he is around, and they are in love, both of them, and from what he can make out, their feelings is just like his. And it come to him all of a sudden he must be in love himself, and it was days and days before he found out who it was that he was in love with.

"Who was it?" asks Freckles.

"It turned out to be Mabel Smith," says Stevie, "and I was scared plumb to death for a week or two that she would find out about it. I used to put toads down her back and stick burrs into her hair so she wouldn't never guess it."

Stevie says he went through days and days of it, and for a while he was scared that it might last forever, and he don't ever want to be in love again. Suppose it should be found out on a fellow that he was in love?

"Stevie," says Freckles, "this is different."

Stevie asks him how he means.

"I *want* her to know," says Freckles.

"Great Scott!" says Stevie. "No!"

"Uh-huh!"

"It don't show on you, Freckles," says Stevie.

Freckles says of course it don't show. Only first love shows, he says. Once before he was in love, he says, and that showed on him. That was last spring, and he was only a kid then, and he was in love with Miss Jones, the school teacher, and didn't know how to hide it. But this time he can hide it, because this time he feels that it is different. He swallows down the signs of it, he says, the way you keep swallowing down the signs of it when you have something terrible like heart-disease or stomach-trouble, and nobody will ever know it about him, likely, till after he is dead.

And when he is dead, Freckles says, they will all wonder what he died of, and maybe he will leave a note, wrote in his own blood, to tell. And they will all come in Injun file and pass through the parlour, he says, where his casket will be set on to four chairs, and She will come filing by and look at him, and she will say not to bury him yet, for there is a note held tight in his hand.

And everybody will say: "A note? A note? Who can it be to?"

And She will say to pardon her for taking the liberty at a time like this, but She has saw her own name on to that note. And then, Freckles says, She will open it and read it out loud right there in the parlour to all of them, and they will all say how the departed must have liked her to draw up a note to her wrote in his own blood like that.

And then, Freckles says, She will say, yes, he must have liked her, and that she liked him an awful lot, too, but She never knew he liked her, and She wished now she had of known he liked her an awful lot, because to write a note in his own blood like that showed that he liked her an awful lot, and if he only was alive now she would show she liked him an awful lot and would kiss him to show it. And she would not be scared to kiss him in front of all those people standing around the sides of the parlour, dead or alive. And then she would kiss him, Freckles says. And maybe, Freckles says, he wouldn't be dead after all, but only just lying there like the boy that travelled around with the hypnotizer who was put in a store window and laid there all the time the hypnotizer was in town with everybody making bets whether they could see him breathing or not. And then, Freckles says, he would get up out of his casket, and his Sunday suit with long pants would be on, and he would take the note and say: "Yes, it is to you, and I wrote it with my own blood!"

Which, Freckles says, he has a loose tooth he could suck blood out of any time, not wanting to scrape his arm on account of blood poison breaking out. Though he says he had thought of using some of Spot's blood, but that would seem disrespectful, somehow. And the tooth-blood seemed disrespectful, too, for he did not know the girl right well. But it would have to be the tooth-blood, he guessed, for there was a fellow out by the county line got lockjaw from blood poison breaking out on him, and died of it. And when She handed him

the note, Freckles says, he would tell the people in the parlour: "Little Eva and I forgive you all!"

"Little Eva!" says Stevie. "Gosh all fish hooks, Freckles, it ain't the girl in the show, is it?"

"Uh-huh!" says Freckles, kind of sad and proud.

"Freckles," says Stevie, after they had both set there and thought, saying nothing, for a while, "I got just one more question to ask you: Are you figuring you will get married? Is it as bad as that?"

"Uh-huh!" says Freckles.

Stevie, he thought for another while, and then he got up and put his hand on to Freckles's shoulder.

"Freckles, old scout," he says, "good-bye. I'm awful sorry for you, but I can't chase around with you any more. I can't be seen running with you. I won't tell this on you, but if it was ever to come out I wouldn't want to be too thick with you. You know what the Dalton Gang would do to you, Freck, if they ever got on to this. I won't blab, but I can't take no risks about chumming with you."

And he went away and left Freckles and me sitting there. But in a minute he came back and said:

"Freckles, you know that iron sling-shot crotch of mine? You always used to be stuck on that sling-shot crotch, Freckles, and I never would trade it to you. Well, Freckles, you can have that darned old iron sling-shot crotch free for nothing!"

"Stevie," says Freckles, "I don't want it."

"Gosh!" says Stevie, and he went off, shaking his head.

And I was considerable worried myself. I tagged him along home, and he wasn't natural. He went into the house, and I tagged him along in and up to his room, and he took no notice of me, though I'm not supposed to be there at all.

And what do you suppose that kid did?—he went and washed his ears. It was midnight, and there wasn't any one to make him do it, and there wasn't any one to see his ears but me, but he washed 'em careful, inside and out. And then he wet his hair and combed it. First he parted it on one side, and then he parted it on the other, and then he blushed and parted it in the middle. I was sitting on the floor by the foot of the bed, and he was facing the looking-glass, but I saw the blush because it spread clear around to the back of his neck.

And then he went to the closet and put on his long pants that belonged to his Sunday suit. The looking-glass wasn't big enough so he could see his hair and his long pants all at the same time, but he tilted the glass and squirmed and twisted around and saw them bit by bit. At first I thought maybe he was going out again, even at that time of night, but he wasn't; all he was doing was admiring himself. Just then his father pounded on the wall and asked him if he wasn't in bed yet, and he said he was going. He put the light out right away. But he didn't go to bed. He just sat in the dark with his clean ears and his long pants on and his hair parted in the middle, and several times before I went to sleep myself I heard him sigh

and say: "Little Eva! Little Eva's dying! Little Eva!"

He must have got so tired he forgot to undress, staying up that late and everything, for in the morning when his father pounded on the door he didn't answer. I was under the bed, and I stayed there. Pretty soon his father pounded again, and then he came into the room. And there Freckles was lying on the bed with his Sunday pants on and his hair parted in the middle and his ears clean.

"Harold!" says his father, and shook him, "what does this mean?"

Harold is Freckles's other name, but if any one of his size calls him Harold, there will be a fight. He sat up on the bed and says, still sleepy:

"What does what mean, Pa?"

"Your lying there asleep with your clothes on," says his father.

"I was dressing, and I went to sleep again," says Freckles.

"Uh-huh!" says his father. "It looks like it, don't it?"

"Yes, sir," says Freckles.

I had crawled out to the foot of the bed where I could see them, and he was still sleepy, but he was trying hard to think up something.

"It looks a lot like it," says his father. "If you had slept in that bed, the covers would have been turned down, wouldn't they?"

"Yes, sir," says Freckles, looking at them.

"Well, what then?" says his father.

"Well, Pa," says Freckles, "I guess I must have made that bed up again in my sleep, and I never knew it."

"Humph!" says his father. "Do you do that often?"

"Yes, sir," says Freckles, "a good deal lately."

"Harold," says his father, real interested, "aren't you feeling well these days?"

"No, Pa," says Freckles, "I ain't felt so very well for quite a while."

"Humph!" says his pa. "How does it come when you dressed yourself you put on your Sunday pants, and this is only Tuesday?"

Harold says he guesses he did that in his sleep, too, the same time he made the bed up.

His pa wants to know if that has ever happened to him before.

"Yes, sir," says Freckles, "once I woke up in the moonlight right out on one of the top limbs of the big maple tree in the front yard, with my Sunday suit on."

"Humph!" says his father. "And was your hair parted in the middle that time, too?"

Freckles, he blushes till you can hardly see his freckles, and feels of his hair. But he is so far in, now, that he can't get out. So he says:

"Yes, sir, every time I get taken that way, so I go around in my sleep, Pa, I find my hair has been parted in the middle, the next morning."

"Uh-huh!" says his pa. "Let's see your ears." And he pinched one of them while he was looking at it, and Freckles says, "Ouch!"

"I thought so," says his pa, but didn't say what he

thought right away. Then pretty soon he says: "Those ears have been washed since that neck has."

"Yes, sir," says Freckles.

"Did you do that in your sleep, too?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you always do that when you have those spells of yours?"

"Yes, sir, I always find my ears have been washed the next morning."

"But never your neck?"

"Sometimes my neck has, and sometimes it hasn't," said Freckles.

"Uh-huh!" says his father, and took notice of me. I wagged my tail, and hung my tongue out, and acted friendly and joyful and happy. If you want to stay on good terms with grown-up humans, you have to keep them jollied along. I wasn't supposed to be in the house at night, anyhow, but I hoped maybe it would be overlooked.

"Did you paint and dye that dog up that way?" asked Freckles's father. For of course the paint and dye they had put on me was still there.

"Yes, sir," says Freckles. "Nearly always when I come to myself in the morning I find I have dyed Spot."

"That's queer, too," said his father. And then Harold says he dyes other dogs, too, and once when he woke up in the maple tree there were three strange dogs he had dyed at the foot of it.

"Harold," says his father, "how often do these spells come on?"

Freckles, he says, some weeks they come often and some weeks hardly ever.

"Humph!" says his father. "And when they come on, do you notice it is harder for you to tell the truth than at any other times?"

Freckles says he doesn't know what he says in his sleep when those spells take him, nor even whether he talks in his sleep or not, but he guesses if he does talk in his sleep what he says would be talk about his dreams, but he can't remember what his dreams are, so he doesn't know whether what he says is true or not.

"Uh-huh!" says his father. "Harold, do you own a gun?"

"No, sir," says Harold. Which is true, for he only owns a third interest in a gun. Tom Mulligan and Stevie Stevenson own the rest of it, and they are keeping it hid in the rafters of Tom Mulligan's barn till they can save money enough to get it fixed so it will shoot.

"You haven't killed anybody in these spells of yours, have you, Harold?" asks his father.

"No, sir," says Freckles.

"How would you know if you had?" asks his father.

Freckles says there would be blood on him next morning, wouldn't there?

"Not," says his father, "if you stood at a distance and killed them with a gun."

Freckles knows he hasn't ever really had any of these spells he says he has had, but from his looks I should judge he was scared, too, by the way his father was acting.

"Pa," he says, "has any one been found dead?"

"The body hasn't been found yet," says his father, "but from what I heard you say, early this morning in your sleep, I should judge one will be found."

I thinks to myself maybe Freckles does do things in his sleep after all, and from the looks of his face he thinks so, too. He is looking scared.

"Pa," he says, "who did I kill? What did I say?"

"You said: 'Little Eva's dying! Little Eva's dying!' " said his father. "I heard you say it over and over again in your sleep."

Freckles, he gets red in the face again, and stares at his feet, and his pa stands and grins at him for a minute or two. And then his pa says: "Get into your week-day clothes and wash your face and neck to match your ears, and come on down to breakfast. When you get ready to tell what's on your mind, all right; but don't try to tell lies to your dad."

"Yes, sir," says Freckles.

But he looked mighty gloomy. And when his father went out of the room he got his fountain pen and sucked some blood out of his loose tooth and tried to spit it into his fountain pen. From which I judged he was still of a notion to write that letter and was pretty low in his mind. But he couldn't spit it into the pen, right. And he cried a little, and then saw me watching him crying and slapped at me with a hairbrush; and then he petted me and I let him pet me, for a dog, if he is any sort of dog at all, will always stand by his boy in trouble as well as gladness, and overlook things. A

boy hasn't got much sense, anyhow; and a boy without a dog to keep him steered right must have a pretty tough time in the world.

If he was low in his mind then, he was lower in his mind before the day was through. For after breakfast there was Stevie Stevenson and Tom Mulligan waiting for him outside, and in spite of his promise, Stevie has told everything to Tom. And Tom has a wart and offers some wart blood to write that letter in. But Freckles says another person's blood would not be fair and honourable. He has a wart of his own, if he wanted to use wart blood, but wart blood is not to be thought of. What would a lady think if she found out it was wart blood? It would be almost and insult, wart blood would; it would be as bad as blood from a corn or bunion.

"Well, then," says Stevie, "the truth is that you don't want to write that letter, anyhow. Last night you talked big about writing that letter, but this morning you're hunting up excuses for not writing it."

"I'll write it if I want to write it, and you can't stop me," says Freckles. "And I won't write it if I don't want to write it, and nobody of your size can make me."

"I can too stop you," says Stevie, "if I want to."

"You don't dast to want to stop me," says Freckles.

"I do dast," says Stevie.

"You don't," says Freckles.

"I do," says Stevie.

"You're a licked, licked liar—and so's your Aunt Mariar," says Freckles.

"I ain't got any Aunt Mariar," says Stevie.

"You don't dast to have an Aunt Mariar," says Freckles.

"I do dast," says Stevie.

Then Tom put a chip on each of their shoulders, and pushed them at each other, and the chips fell off, and they went down behind the barn and had it out, and Freckles licked him. Which proves Freckles couldn't be stopped from writing that note if he wanted to, and he was still so mad that he wrote it right then and there back of the barn on a leaf torn out of a notebook Tom Mulligan owned, with his fountain pen, using his own nose bleed that Stevie had just drawed out of him; and he read out loud what he wrote. It was:

Dear Miss Little Eva: The rose is red, the violet's blue. Sugar is sweet and so are you. Yours truly. Mr. H. Watson. This is wrote in my own blood.

"Well, now, then," says Stevie, "where's the coffin?"

"What do you mean, the coffin?" says Freckles.

"Last night," says Stevie, "you was makin' a lot of brags, but this morning it looks like you didn't have the sand to act up to them."

"If you think you've got size enough to make me lay down into a coffin with that note," says Freckles, "you got another think comin' to you. There ain't a kid my size, nor anywhere near my size, in this whole town can make me lay down into a coffin with that note. And if you think so, you just try it on!"

Stevie, he doesn't want to fight any more. But Tom

Mulligan says never mind the casket. Nobody really wants him to lay in a casket anyhow. He says he is willing to bet a million dollars Freckles doesn't dast to carry that note to the show grounds and give it to that Little Eva.

"I dast!" says Freckles.

"Dastn't!" says Tom.

"You don't dast to knock this chip off my shoulder," says Freckles.

"I dast!" says Tom. And Stevie give him a push, and he did it. And they had it. Freckles got him down and jammed his head into the ground.

"Now, then," he says, "do I dast to carry that note, or don't I dast to?"

"You dast to," says Tom. "Leave me up."

And that was the way it come about that Freckles had to carry the note, though not wanting to at all. But he did it. We all went with him over to the show grounds, Stevie Stevenson and Tom Mulligan and Mutt, Tom's dog, and me.

There was a lady sitting out in front of one of the tents on a chair. She had been washing her hair, and it was spread out to dry over her shoulders, and she was sewing on a pair of boy's pants. She had on a pair of those big horn-rimmed glasses, and we could see from her hair, which had gray in it, that she was quite an old lady, though small. I heard later that she was all of thirty-five or thirty-six years old.

The rest of us hung back a little ways, and Freckles went up to her and took off his hat.

She laid down her sewing and smiled at him.

"Well, my little man, what is it?" she said. "Were you looking for somebody?"

"Yes, ma'am," says Freckles. He stuttered a little and he was standing on one foot.

"For whom?" she asked.

"For Little Eva," says Freckles.

The lady stared at him, and then she smiled again.

"And what do you want with Little Eva, sonny?" she said.

Freckles, he stands on the other foot a while, and says nothing. And like as not he would have backed away, but Tom Mulligan yells: "You don't dast give it to her, Freck!"

Then Freckles hands her the letter and gulps and says: "A letter for Miss Little Eva."

The lady takes it and reads it. And then she reads it again. And then she calls out: "Jim! Oh, Jim!"

A man comes out of the tent, and she hands it to him. He reads it, and his mouth drops open, and a pipe he is smoking falls on to the grass.

"Jim," says the lady, "someone is making love to your wife!"

Jim, he reads the letter again, and then he laughs. He laughes so hard he bends double, and catches the back of the lady's chair. And she laughs of a sudden and puts her hand in front of her face and laughs again. And then Jim, he says to Freckles, who has been getting redder and redder:

"And who is Mr. H. Watson?"

"Don't you get it?" says the lady, taking off her glasses to wipe them, and pointing to Freckles. "This is the boy that owns the dog that played the bloodhound last night, and *he* is Mr. H. Watson!"

And when she took off her glasses like that, we all saw she was the Little Eva of that show!

"Mr. H. Watson," says Jim to Freckles, "did you intend matrimony, or were you trying to flirt?"

"Quit your kidding him, Jim," says Little Eva, still laughing. "Can't you see he's hacked nearly to death?"

"None of your business what I intended!" yells Freckles to Jim. And he picks up a clod of dirt and nearly hits Jim with it, and runs. And we all run. But when we had run half a block, we looked back, and nobody was following us. Jim and Little Eva had busted out laughing again, and was laughing so hard they was hanging on to each other to keep from falling down.

"Good-bye, Mr. H. Watson," yells Jim. "Is it really your own blood?"

And then began a time of disgrace for Freckles and me such as I never hope to live through again. For the next thing those two boys that had been his friends was both dancing round him laughing and calling him Mr. H. Watson; and by the time we got down to the part of Main Street where the stores are, every boy and every dog in town was dancing around Freckles and hearing all about it and yelling, "H. Watson! Mr. H. Watson!

Is it your own blood? Is it your own blood, Mr. H. Watson?"

Freckles and I did the best we could, fighting all that was our size and some bigger; but after a couple of hours it got so that most any one could lick us. Kids that was afraid to stand up to him the day before could lick him easy, by now, and dogs I had always despised even to argue with began to get my number. All you could hear, on every side, was: "Is it your *own* blood, Mr. Watson?"

And at noon we went home, but Freckles didn't go into the house for dinner at all. Instead, he went out to the barn and laid down in the hay, and I crawled in there with him. And he cried and cried and choked and choked. I felt sorry for him, and crawled up and licked his face. But he took me by the scruff of the neck and slung me out of the haymow. When I crawled back again, he kicked me in the ribs, but he had on tennis shoes and it didn't hurt much, and anyhow I forgave him. And I went and crawled back to where he was and nuzzled my head up under his armpit. And then he cried harder and hugged me and said I was the best dog in the world and the only friend he ever had.

And then I licked his face again and he let me and we both felt better, and pretty soon he went to sleep there and slept for an hour or so, with his head on my ribs, and I lay there quiet so as not to wake him. Even when a flea got me, I let that flea bite and didn't scratch for fear of waking him. But after a while that flea got tired of me, and crawled over on to Freckles, and he

waked natural. And when he waked, he was hungry, but he didn't want to go into the house for fear the story had spread to the grown-ups and he would have to answer questions. So he found a couple of raw turnips, and ate them, and a couple of apples, only they were green, and he milked the cow a little into an old tin cup and drank that. And in a little while he begins to have pains, and he thinks he is getting heart's disease and is really going to die, but he says to himself out loud if he dies now he won't get any credit for it, and he would have enjoyed it more if he had died while he still thought Little Eva was young and beautiful and probably going to marry him in the end.

But after awhile it seems turning from heart's disease into some kind of stomach trouble; so he drinks some stuff out of a bottle that was left in the barn last spring when Bessie, the old roan mare, had the colic, and whether it is heart's disease or stomach trouble, that stuff cures him. And him and me drift along downtown again to see if maybe the kids have sort of begun to forget about it a little.

But they hadn't. It had even spread to some of the grown-ups. We went into Freckles's father's drug store, and Mr. Watson told Freckles to step around to the post office and ask for his mail. And the clerk in the post office when we come in, looks at Freckles very solemn and says:

"Ah, here is Mr. H. Watson, after a letter! Will you have a letter written in blood?"

So Freckles told his dad there wasn't any mail, and

we sneaked along home again. That night at supper I was lying on the porch just outside the dining room and the doors were open, and I heard Freckles's dad say:

"Harold, would you like to go to the show to-night?"

"No, Pa," says Freckles.

His mother says that is funny; it is the first time she ever heard him refuse to go to a show of any kind. And his father asks him if anything special has happened that makes him want to stay away from this particular show. I guess when his father says that, Freckles thinks his father is wise, too, so he says he has changed his mind and will go to the show after all. He didn't want to start any argument.

So him and me sneaks down to the show grounds again. It is getting dark, but too early for the show, and every kid we know is hanging around outside. And what Freckles has had to stand for in the way of kidding beforehand is nothing to what comes now. For they all gets around him in a ring and shouts: "Here is the bridegroom! Here is Mr. H. Watson come to get married to Little Eva! And the wedding invitations are wrote in his own blood! His own blood! His own blood!"

And the grown-ups beginning to go into the show all tell each other what the kids are getting at, and we hear them laughing to each other about it. Him and me was about the two downest-tail-and-head-hangingest persons you ever saw. But we stayed. There wasn't no place else to go, except home, and we didn't want to

go home and be asked again if there was any special reason for staying away from that particular show.

And right in the midst of all the yelling and jostling around, a kid about Freckles's size comes out of the show tent and walks over to the bunch and says:

"Now, then, what's all this yelling about Little Eva for?"

All the kids shut up, and this show kid says to Freckles:

"Was they yelling bridegroom at *you?*"

Freckles, he was down, but he wasn't going to let any out-of-town boy get away with anything, either. All our own gang had him licked and disgraced, and he knew it; but this was a stranger, and so he spunked up.

"S'pose they was yelling bridegroom at me," he says. "Ain't they got a right to yell bridegroom at me if they want to? This is a free country."

"You won't be yelled bridegroom at if I say you won't," says the show kid.

"I'll be yelled bridegroom at for all of you," says Freckles. "What's it to you?"

"You won't be yelled bridegroom at about my mother," saws the show kid.

"Who's being yelled bridegroom at about your mother?" says Freckles. "I'm being yelled at about Little Eva."

"Well, then," says this kid, "Little Eva is my mother, and you got to stop being yelled at about her."

"Well, then," says Freckles, "you just stop me being yelled at if you think you're big enough."

"I could lick two your size," says the show kid. "But I won't fight here. I won't fight in front of this crowd. If I was to fight here, your crowd might jump into me, too, and I would maybe have to use brass knucks, and if I was to use brass knucks, I would likely kill someone and be arrested for it. I'll fight in private like a duel, as gentlemen ought to."

"Well, then," says Freckles, "if any one was to use brass knucks on me, I would have to use brass knucks on them, and I won't fight any one that uses brass knucks in private."

"Well, then," says the show kid, "my brass knucks is in my trunk in the tent, and you don't dast to follow me and fight with bare fists."

"My brass knucks is at home," says Freckles, which was the first I knew he ever had any, "and I do dast."

So each one searched the other for brass knucks, and they went off together, me following. The fight was to be under the bridge over the crick down by the schoolhouse on the edge of the woods. But when they got down there, the strip of sand by the side of the crick was in shadow. So they went on top of the bridge, to fight in the moonlight. But the moonlight was so bright they were afraid they would be seen by some farmer coming into town and maybe told on and arrested. So they sat down on the edge of the bridge with their feet hanging over and talked about where they had better fight to be private, as gentlemen should. And they got to talking of other things. And pretty soon they began to kind of like each other, and Freckles says:

"What's your name?"

"Percy," says the show kid. "But you better not call me that. I'd fight if I was called that out of the family. Call me Spike. What's your name?"

"Well, then," says Freckles, "I don't like mine either; mine is Harold. But call me Freckles."

Spike says he wished he had more freckles himself. But he don't get much chance for freckles, he says; his mother takes such awful good care of all the complexions in their family.

"Well, then," says Freckles, "I think your mother is an awful nice lady."

Spike, all of a sudden, bursts out crying then and says how would Freckles like it if people wrote notes to *his* mother and was yelled at about her? And Freckles says how would *he* like it if *he* was the one was yelled at, and he never had any idea the lady was grown up and had a family, and he got to sniffling some himself.

"Spike," he says, "you tell your mother I take it all back. You tell her I was in love with her till I seen her plain off the stage, and since I have seen her and her family plain, I don't care two cents for her. And I'll write her an apology for falling into love with her."

Which he done it, then and there, in the moonlight, jabbing his fountain pen into his wart, and it read:

> Dear Little Eva. Since I seen your husband and son I decided not to say anything about matrimony, and beg your pardon for it. This is wrote in my blood and sets you

free to fall in love with who you please. You are older and look different from what I expected, and so let us forget bygones.

Yours truly,
H. WATSON.

"Spike," says Freckles, when they were walking back to town together, chewing licorice and pretending it was tobacco, "do you really have some brass knucks?"

"No," says Spike. "Do you, Freckles?"

"No," says Freckles.

And they went back to the tent together and asked the gang if they wanted any of their game, and nobody did, and the disgrace lifted.

And I felt so good about that and the end of the love-affair and everything, that right then and there I hunted up that Burning Deck dog and give him the licking of his life, which I had never been able to do before.

THE END

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